



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

before the United Nations Security Council

on

"WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY"

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(Final text)

"WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY"

Mr. President,

It is a pleasure to see you, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, presiding over this historic open debate on "*Women and Peace and Security*". My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to you and the Namibian delegation for this initiative which demonstrates your country's and your own commitment to the advancement of women. We also wish to recall the leadership you provided as President of the 23rd Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly: "*Women 2000 - Equality, Development and Peace*". I also wish to express appreciation to the Secretary-General, to Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues, Angela King, and to Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM, for their important statements.

Our treatment of the issues today also comes in the wake of the commemoration of International Women's Day on March 8, 2000, when, for the first time, the Council gave recognition to the role of women in the peace process.

Mr. President,

It will be recalled that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action identified the impact of armed conflict and other deep rooted conflicts on women as one of its critical areas of concern. It recognized that the welfare of women is always threatened by violence and destructive conflict. Peace building work is therefore fundamental to the health and welfare of women living in communities and societies suffering from deep rooted and violent conflict.

Today's debate in the Security Council is a timely recognition of the increasingly disproportionate effects of war on civilians, particularly women and children, and the important leadership role of women in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict. It remains a matter of serious concern that women have become caught in the center of violent conflict and often become the direct and deliberate victims of the most egregious abuses committed by parties to armed conflict. Girls and women continue to be victims of rape, trafficking, forced prostitution, abduction and torture. The video presentation we saw at the beginning of the debate provided a poignant reminder of the plight of women in situations of armed conflict across the globe.

Despite these challenges, women have become increasingly effective participants at the peace table and have continued to assist in creating an enabling environment for conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace-building and post conflict reconstruction. The role of women in preserving social order and fostering reconciliation cannot be overlooked without serious consequences to the peace process. If peace is to be actively and effectively pursued, gender-based exclusion must be addressed. Indeed, we must recognize that sustainable peace can hardly be achieved if the experiences, and perspectives of 50% of the population are not given the attention they deserve.

Members of the Council had an opportunity to exchange views on the subject yesterday during an Arria Formula Meeting. The participation in this meeting of representatives from the non-governmental organizations working at the grassroots level brought into sharp focus the need for sustained attention to the plight of women victims of violent conflict, and to their crucial role in fostering a culture of peace in their communities. The recommendations that emanated from that meeting deserve the attention of the Council.

One of the conclusions drawn from yesterday's discussion, which we strongly support, is the need to ensure women's adequate representation at all levels of the decision-making process, at the conflict prevention, peacemaking and peace building stages. The role of women in conflict prevention has, in many parts of the world, proved important. In this context, comprehensive and systematic measures undertaken to prevent the resurgence or escalation of conflict by civil society, including grassroots women's organizations, are particularly noteworthy and deserve the support of the international community. We therefore support the call by Graça Machel for a study on women in armed conflict.

The initiatives undertaken by women in East Timor, Guatemala, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Burundi and many other countries, to contribute to the creation of a peaceful and secure environment point, in many respects, to the important role of women as equal partners in securing peace. In Somalia, women have effectively mobilized civil society to promote dialogue among the warring factions and have given invaluable support to the national peace process. These efforts, which have recently engaged the attention of the Council, point unequivocally to the strategic importance of women in the peace process.

However, despite the role of women in promoting peace and the progress made in implementing various international agreements relating to the expansion of women's participation in peace processes, much remains to be done to ensure that women are increasingly seen as equal partners in decision-making processes. The Windhoek Declaration adopted in Namibia in May 2000 represents a valuable step in highlighting the importance of this issue and of mainstreaming a gender perspective into peace support operations.

In recent assessments of United Nations peace operations, a number of important elements, which are relevant to the incorporation of a gender dimension in peacekeeping, have unfortunately been overlooked. It is also a matter of concern for my delegation that women are still under-represented in decision making in the area of conflict resolution. It is in this context that while we recognize the important recommendations contained in the Brahimi Report on Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations, we believe that the implementation of these recommendations should include, where appropriate, the participation of women at all levels. My delegation wishes to express appreciation to the Secretary-General for the appointments he has made of women as Special Representatives and Special Envoys; but we believe that much more needs to be done. Member states have a responsibility to present for appointments to high-level posts, qualified women for consideration.

It is important not only to address the conceptual and structural framework of peace operations, but also to ensure that attention is given to those institutional elements which determine the participation of those with the capacity to make a difference. The record of women in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peace-building should certainly be taken into account.

Mr. President,

My delegation fully supports the view that comprehensive gender considerations should be incorporated into peacekeeping missions. In support of this approach, member states should ensure that they increase the number of women in their military and civilian police forces who are qualified to serve in peace operations. Additionally, member states need to ensure that gender sensitivity is incorporated into their national training programmes for military and civilian police designated to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The sensitization of United Nations personnel to the needs and vulnerabilities of women is critical and should be complemented by concrete steps to deal promptly with violations of international law committed by peacekeeping personnel, particularly those against women and girls. Personnel involved in United Nations peace building activities should also be given appropriate training on the protection, rights and particular rights of women as a matter of priority. In this connection, we note the existence of gender focal points in the United Nations Missions in East Timor, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Based on the lessons learnt, consideration must, however, be given to establishing these gender units in all peacekeeping missions.

Ending impunity for sexual and gender based violence in situations of conflict remains priority for attention. Crimes including rape, sexual torture, forced impregnation and sexual slavery, continue to represent serious violations of the rights of women. My delegation welcomes the fact that the International Criminal Court defines these crimes as grave breaches of International law. We stress the importance of bringing to justice those who violate the rights of women and note the attention given to prosecuting crimes against women in the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia.

It is, however, important that women not only be allowed to participate in peace operations but also that they be given special attention in reconstruction and post conflict peace building initiatives. Given that women have been particularly victimized during war, special attention should also be given to their needs and potentials in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programmes. In this context, the Council must ensure special attention to the needs of women in reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. The involvement of refugee and displaced women in the design and management of humanitarian activities represents also an important element in ensuring that they enjoy equal benefits to men. The full implementation of gender mainstreaming in the post conflict reconstruction period should not be overlooked as a critical factor in ensuring sustainable peace.

We would like to commend the Secretary-General for his commitment and initiatives aimed at integrating a gender sensitive approach within the Organization, which was emphasized in his Millennium Report. It is also in this context that we welcome the report on "*Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multi-Dimensional Peace Operations*", prepared by the Department for Peacekeeping

Operations, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). My delegation wishes to thank Ms. King for presenting the study to the Council, the results of which emphasises the impact that participation of women can make on United Nations peace operations.

We also thank her for the recommendations for future action, which the Council will consider when it takes up the draft resolution later this month. As the Beijing Platform for Action so aptly reminded us, "*in a world of continuing instability and violence, the implementation of cooperative approaches to peace and security is urgently needed.*" Women cannot be left out of the equation.

Today, as we celebrate United Nations Day, it is fitting that we draw attention to the role of women as agents for the promotion of peace, security and development. The time has come for us to move from rhetoric to action. The women of the world expect no less from this Council.

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