

Press Release

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Toshiro Ozawa
Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations
At the Open Meeting of the Security Council
On "Women, Peace and Security"
United Nations, New York
29 October 2003

Mr. President,

At the outset, I should like to pay tribute to the President of the Security Council, Ambassador John D. Negroponte, for convening this meeting on the third anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. I should also like to extend my appreciation to Mr. Jean-Marie Guehenno, Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Ms. Amy Smythe, Senior Gender Adviser to MONUC, for their insightful observations regarding the implementation of the resolution.

Mr. President,

The ultimate goal of the international community, and therefore of the United Nations, is to build a world free from conflict. By adopting this resolution three years ago, the Security Council showed its wisdom by fully recognizing the important roles played by women and girls in the process of building and maintaining peace and security. As a country striving to do its utmost in the areas of conflict prevention and post-conflict peace building, Japan fully supports this declaration and will intensify its efforts to implement it. Moreover, empowering women is one of the key elements of enhancing peace and security.

Mr. President,

Allow me to share with you some modest but practical steps that Japan has taken in this regard. In Afghanistan, we remember that under the Taliban regime, women were denied access to education and work outside their homes. For the country under a reconstruction process like Afghanistan, Japan is convinced that women's participation is absolutely essential, and thus a gender perspective is taken into account in all aspects of Japan's programs of reconstruction and humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan. For example, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) sent experts on gender issues to the Ministry of Women Affairs, to the area of the rehabilitation of women's schools and colleges, and to the mother and child health care hospital. Japan provides UNIFEM with assistance through the Trust Fund for Human Security. This assistance finances vocational training, seminars, and income-generating programs for female Afghan refugees and displaced persons. We believe that such programs help to empower women and girls and encourage them to assume more active roles in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

Allow me to share with you another example of the efforts Japan is making. In February last year, the Government of Japan dispatched its Ground Self Defense Forces Engineer Group of 680 members, together with 10 headquarters personnel, to the United Nations peacekeeping operations. For the first time in our history, Japan included female personnel in this large PKO unit. Seven women were members of the group, a relatively small number, but significant nonetheless, we believe. Japan recognizes the need for expanding the roles and contributions of women in United Nations field-based operations, and indeed for increasing the participation of women at all levels. We are starting by doing what we can, but have every intention of broadening and increasing our efforts.

Mr. President,

On this third anniversary, I reaffirm the commitment of my delegation to the implementation of the provisions of this resolution, and my delegation condemns the

violations of the human rights of women and girls in conflict situations wherever they occur.

We are all aware that women experience conflict in different ways than men. In a conflict situation, women are often widows grieving over the loss of their husbands, mothers who mourn their lost children, and victims of violence that targets their gender. Today, however, women's roles are changing in every aspect, and more women have a say in how they will participate in conflict resolution. More women can participate not only by providing non-military support, but also by assuming important roles in peace building if they so wish.

In order to provide an effective response to the changing needs and priorities of women and girls who take on this range of tasks, gender perspectives have to be more systematically integrated into all activities related to peace and security. There is still much to be done in this regard. Japan hopes that the Security Council, Member States, the United Nations system - including the offices within the Secretariat responsible for these issues - NGOs, and civil society as a whole will all do everything in their power to fully and systematically implement the recommendations of this resolution.

To conclude, Mr. President, may this discussion be a demonstration of the firm commitment of the entire international community to achieving the goal of creating a world of peace and security.

Thank you very much.