

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security – 29 October 2008
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KENYA

Mr. Muita (Kenya): I have the honour to participate in today's debate. At the outset, let me express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for organizing and presiding over this debate. I also thank Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Mr. Alain Le Roy, Ms. Inés Alberdi and Ms. Sarah Taylor for their insightful statements.

The special focus of today's debate on women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security could not have come at a better time. I believe that we must make concrete and specific efforts to advance the inclusion and participation of women in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, disarmament and security sector reform.

Kenya welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/622), which offers useful recommendations on accelerating the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It is now eight years since we adopted that landmark resolution. Commendable progress has been made through the efforts of Member States, the United Nations system and civil society. Nevertheless, much remains to be done. Each forward step requires rethinking of the next as progress continues. We must therefore continue to work together by taking concrete measures in all areas and at all levels. That is in the interest of all peoples.

Women's contributions, both in the domestic arena and in the paid workforce, constitute crucial contributions to national economies. It is always women who are severely and negatively affected by war and other conflict situations. Very often, they have no real say in peace negotiations, justice processes, peacebuilding and reconstruction, or securing domestic stability and humanitarian assistance. It is therefore crucial that we collectively address the structural and institutional impediments to women's equal participation and full involvement. In that regard, it is important that more women be appointed to senior positions at United Nations Headquarters and in field missions.

Towards the end of its sixty-second session, the General Assembly made a bold move to adopt a draft resolution that included a general United Nations gender architecture. I believe that, when that structure is finally in place, it will remove the systemic impediments that have hampered women's participation in high-level decision-making and their involvement in peace initiatives.

At the national level, Kenya recognizes the centrality of gender equality and the critical role that women can play in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Our national policy on gender and development incorporates and integrates women into the mainstream of decision-making through regulatory and institutional reform. That is further complemented by the presidential decree of 2006 that reserved for women 30 per cent of all appointments, recruitment and promotions in the public sector. Those efforts to enhance the participation and involvement of women have started to bear fruit. Women are increasingly assuming leadership roles in many areas, especially the judicial, legislative and electoral sectors.

The beginning of this year was a particularly difficult period for Kenya following the post-election violence in January and February. Women and girls were particularly affected. Quick action by the Government, with the help of the United Nations and the greater international community, averted further deterioration of the situation. In the subsequent mediation process, women leaders participated as principal negotiators on both sides of the political divide. Two of those women are

now serving as senior Cabinet ministers in the Grand Coalition Government.

In conclusion, I reaffirm once again my delegation's unequivocal support for the equal participation and full involvement of women in the maintenance and promotion of sustainable peace. We hope to see more women participating fully in the process of decision-making in matters relating to their needs and concerns