

Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
Tuesday, 24th October 2000, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Mr. Kassé, Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations

Allow me to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you preside over this important meeting, Mr. Minister, and at your having taken this initiative. We also wish to thank, through you, the Secretary-General; Mrs. Angela King, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women; Mrs. Noleen Heyzer, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); and the delegation of Namibia to the Security Council, led by Ambassador Andjaba. We also thank all those who are present today.

Peace is our first objective, and it is undeniably here, in the Security Council, that peace must be ensured. But allow me to add that without women, it is difficult to ensure peace.

The women of Mali did not wait for the Republic of Mali to achieve national sovereignty to become involved in the prevention, settlement and management of conflict. In traditional society, conflict resolution was a collective effort, and the sacrifices that had to be made were in the interest of the entire community. Thus, women played a very important, endogenous role.

In conflicts between communities, it is not unusual for warring communities to resort to marriage to restore peace. That makes it possible to seal a pact of friendship, solidarity or cooperation.

Similarly, women have always been considered a part of the entire community and of the family, and not just the wife of a single individual. Allied societies submit to the rules of marriage to avoid breaking the social relationship established through the link of marriage. Declared conflicts between communities linked by marriages are generally quelled by the intervention of women, through whom that matrimonial linkage is established.

African women have always contributed to facilitating and supporting as a matter of priority the intermingling of tribes and the strengthening of unity through the bonds of matrimony, as they are the strongest links in the chain of solidarity, fraternity and harmony. However, we must now recognize that individualism, which was formerly proscribed, has gained ground on these values to such an extent that it has led to internal conflict. Africa has thus entered the most troubling period of its history.

Mali has not been able to escape that scourge. In 1990 a Tuareg rebellion broke out in the north of the country. As in other parts of the world, women do not usually decide to go to war and they do not wage it. Nevertheless, they suffer tremendously as a result of wars and lose those dearest to them — fathers, husbands and sons — and even lose their honour and their dignity. Aware of this fact, the women of Mali decided they would manage not only atrocities and their devastating consequences, but that they would also participate actively in preserving peace and national unity. This conscious decision involved women in the search for peaceful solutions to the crisis that shook northern Mali and had various effects.

Those effects included appeals to mobilize for peace; the development and implementation of a plan of action and information campaign for peace; the national mobilization of women around slogans calling for peace and reconciliation; the mobilization of resources for peace; the involvement of women in the prevention and management of conflict and in the consolidation of peace; humanitarian activities focused on civilian victims; participation in preliminary negotiations for the restoration of peace; and, finally, participation in negotiating and finalizing the National Peace Pact, which brought peace back to northern Mali. With the restoration of peace, the women of Mali continue their struggle, together with the rest of civil society, to consolidate peace, and extend a hand to all other women in countries undergoing crisis.

The women of Mali remain convinced that in order to ensure the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations — which today have progressed from traditional peacekeeping operations to multidimensional activities in support of peace — the principles of gender equity and equality must find a place in all missions, at all levels, in order to guarantee men and women the same role in every element of the peace process: peacekeeping, reconciliation and peacebuilding. In this connection, we firmly support the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a

Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations, which was adopted at Windhoek on 31 May 2000.

During the Security Council Summit of 7 September 2000, the President of the Republic of Mali, who presided over the Council, welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative by declaring that the report submitted by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi is a milestone in the process that will make the United Nations "a truly credible force for peace." (S/PV.4194, p. 20)

At a time when mankind must more than ever before be the measure of the new millennium, and when people expect the United Nations to be the promoter and guarantor of a world of progress for all — a world of peace, solidarity and sharing — the Security Council must demonstrate a clear and discernible capacity for action that both deters and reassures. To achieve that capacity we must fully integrate women as never before as partners and beneficiaries in all aspects of a peace process: peacekeeping, reconciliation and peace-building.

Mali is studying with great interest the recommendations that have been made with regard to the topic under consideration, and will actively and positively participate in the negotiations on the relevant draft resolution.