

**Statement by Mr. Durga Prasad Bhattarai, Deputy Permanent Representative
of Nepal to the United Nations, at the Security Council Open Discussion on
Women and Peace and Security
New York, 25 October 2000**

Mr. President,

At the outset, I wish to thank you for organising this open debate on women and peace and security. This topical issue needs greater thrust in a conflict-ridden world.

We appreciate the opening statement of Secretary-General Kofi Annan as well as the presentations by Assistant Secretary-General Angela King and UNIFEM's Executive Director Noelleen Heyzer before the Council.

In our culture, women are the source of strength. An old verse in Sanskrit maintains - God takes his abode where women enjoy respect. Without casting any aspersion on fellow men, let me say women make more compassionate and often more effective leader. They go to the root of the problem when they have to address it.

Let me cite an example. Few years ago, in some remote parts of Nepal, women rose to rectify a social and economic malady. In those poverty-stricken areas, men would squander their meagre incomes on drinking. They would come home inebriated, touch off a row and beat up their wives and children in drunken stupor.

Tired of this, women pressed the government to declare those areas "dry zones". Once there was no liquor to drink, men shared chores more, household violence declined, families had better food as their incomes were properly used, and children were spared of gratuitous exposure to alcohol and violence. Controlling the booze was hard to sustain in a male dominated world but it worked.

Many studies have established that women tend to be more sincere, more reliable, and more compassionate; they also tend to make prudent use of their resources. Nepal's micro-credit programme reveals that women default on their loans less, their earnings are used to meet the family needs more, and their repayment rate is higher than that of their male counterparts.

In conflict situations, women become the victims of outrage and violence. They are harassed, abused, maimed, mutilated, raped, compelled to bear the stigma of outrage, or killed. They frequently witness horrendous abuse meted out to their children. They know the pain of losing their husbands and sons to war. They know first hand where the shoe pinches.

Men may even subconsciously wish the excitement of adventure that conflicts present. Women are more likely to shun violence more consistently.

For these reasons and more, women are likely to be more committed to resolving disputes more peacefully than men are.

Women constitute more than fifty percent of the global population. Conflicts

make more women and children victims than men. Women have been able to do most of the things as men have: from scaling Mount Everest to running the country.

Still, women are seldom at the forefront of resolving disputes, preventing conflicts, and keeping peace. They are yet to attain equality and find their proper place in society. This has to change.

Change is something we have already agreed to make. From the United Nations Charter, Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and a number of other conventions, including humanitarian law, have already drawn up the blueprint. All we need to do is implement those provisions in real life to let women enjoy equality in walks of life, and let them apply their ingenuity to solve the world's problems.

We see three distinct roles for women in peace and security area in the context of the United Nations.

First, the United Nations must work to empower women around the world by encouraging equality and implementation of human rights provisions already agreed upon.

Second, women must be sent out to the field as peacekeepers and peacemakers more than what has been the case so far. Thus, they can have a better feel of the ground realities and can bring that experience in formulating informed strategies for a durable peace.

Third, we must have more women in the United Nations system, especially at the policy level. They will bring their compassion and a fresh outlook to their work. They are likely to put conflicts in their proper perspective, try to look into it in its entirety, and fashion solutions in a holistic manner.

One caution is in order here, though. Women must work hard to bridge the gap and catch up. They should do more to acquire skills and competitive edge. They ought to strive for their own empowerment. Generous pledges of equality will not bear fruit unless women take the initiative to excel and lead the change.

A gender-based quota, as a quick fix, does make sense. But at the end of the day, it is the quality that sustains the gains of women, not the quota.

As women are superior in caring, providing, loving, and balancing in every day life let them also use their skills, warmth, caution and compassion to promote peace and security to this strife-stricken world. If they can bring peace in their home and village, they can do that in the country and the world. Partnership between men and women is sure to bring tremendous synergy.

Women can make a difference if they had the opportunity to do so. Let the mothers and sisters of the world be authors of peace and security in the new century.

Thank you Mr. President.