



**PERMANENT MISSION OF
THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

235 East 45th Street, 16th floor
New York, NY 10017

tel. (212) 519-9500
fax (212) 370-1954
www.pvnewyork.org

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Bert Koenders,

Minister for Development Cooperation

of

the Kingdom of the Netherlands

**Open Debate of the Security Council on
“Women, Peace and Security”
(Resolution 1325)**

New York, 23 October 2007

Please check against delivery

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

Approximately one third of all women in the Congolese province of Kivu have been raped. In Sudan, tens of thousands of women in the last years have been molested, mutilated and sexually abused, and not a single person has been held accountable.

Recently, I visited the Democratic Republic of Congo. Even though I knew all the statistics, I was still horrified by what I saw in refugee camps and local hospitals. Unfortunately, this pattern of abuse is found in nearly all of the world's conflict areas. Wherever hostilities erupt, women and girls are most vulnerable. In the former Yugoslavia, women were purposefully raped to 'bear the enemy's children'. In Central America the violence against women is increasing with dramatic figures and we find similar grave situations around the world. The responsibility to protect is an urgent call here.

Mr. President,

Violence against women is more than a violation of human rights. It is also a security issue. Over the last decade, violence against women has become endemic in conflict zones. It has become a weapon of modern warfare, that specifically and structurally targets women. That is why it is so important that it is discussed here. Doctors two weeks ago spoke of a horrible epidemic.

The UN Security Council took a big step forward when it unanimously adopted resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Violence against women is only one aspect of Resolution 1325; but it is one that deserves the immediate and urgent attention of everyone in this room, for it is the most prominent aspect underlining the little progress we have made since the adoption of the resolution in 2000. We have been telling ourselves for seven years now that it is more than words on paper. It is a clarion call to arms, a catalyst.

In the Netherlands we are developing a National Action Plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 in consultation with all relevant Ministries and civil society. I will ensure you that it will not remain another piece of paper.

More than anything, we need leadership. Let us set an agenda for action here today. An agenda that I believe should focus on four issues.

Mr. President,

First, we need to include women in our security strategies. This means investing more strongly in Security Sector Reform and in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programmes in post-conflict countries to ensure that violence against women does not continue after a conflict has ended. We need to train armies and soldiers; making them aware that violence against women is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The Netherlands will allocate extra funding for SSR, DDR and training programmes in fragile states. It already provided DPKO with funds for gender expertise to integrate a gender perspective into peace keeping operations.

Second, empowerment. In the DRC, women risk their own lives to encourage others to report sexual abuse to the proper authorities. We need to create safe havens for women who suffered from violence and help them reintegrate in societies. We have to support women who set up their own networks for conflict prevention and dealing with trauma. And, even more so, we need to ensure that women get the place they deserve at the table in formal peace processes. In Liberia, women played an essential role in the peace process, bringing people together across factional lines. I recently created a fund for women's rights and empowerment. I hope other donors will follow this example, so that we can pool our efforts.

Third, I would like to call for the speedy conclusion of the ongoing consultations about the new gender entity of the UN and to stress that this entity will have to make violence against women an urgent issue. We should also support the UN-agency programmes directed against violence against women, especially the UN Trustfund to End Violence against Women, administered by UNIFEM.

Finally, we have to stop impunity. The grave violations of women's human rights through massive rape and other sexual violence require the immediate attention of organisations like the International Criminal Court and other relevant tribunals. The

Security Council can play a role in this by referring such cases to the ICC. We have to give a clear signal to the perpetrators that the international community is no longer tolerating impunity for these heinous crimes.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to underline the crucial role of the Security Council to address violence against women in conflict situations. In this respect I would like to express my strong support for the Secretary General's recommendation to establish a dedicated monitoring mechanism to increase the effectiveness of the Security Council's contribution to preventing and redressing violence against women in armed conflict.

Last but not least, uncomfortable issues like rape and other forms of sexual violence against women, should be openly discussed with and by governments, members of parliament, militia leaders and opinion makers. By us. The Security Council has to raise its voice on this issue. The Big Silence has to stop. I hope that this debate in the Security Council will give this clear message to the international community.

Mr. President,

Let us join forces and implement resolution 1325. Let us end the abuse of women everywhere by stopping the Big Silence today.

Thank you Mr. President.