

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Schaper Permanent Mission of Netherlands to the United Nations.

My delegation welcomes this debate, and would like to make a few remarks in addition to the statements by the observer of the European Union and others underlining the importance of women's civil society organizations in contributing to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

The Netherlands has placed gender equality at the heart of its policies for decades. On the international level, we support female leadership, the follow-up to resolution 1325 (2000), women's economic empowerment and the elimination of violence against women.

In December 2011, the Netherlands launched its second 1325 national action plan, covering the period 2012-2015. As we see it, the plan is unique of its kind, since it is based on and encompasses close cooperation between Government, civil society and research institutions. It brings together Dutch Government ministries and research institutions and 32 civil society organizations, including multinational non-governmental organizations (NGOs), women's peace movements and diaspora organizations. Our national action plan is based on many different sources of knowledge and experience and is designed to be both ambitious and feasible. It has a thematic and a geographical focus. Thematically, it is fully dedicated to enhancing female leadership and political leverage in conflict-affected societies. Geographically, it focuses on six countries — Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the Sudan and Colombia — as well as on the Middle East and North Africa region.

As a result of that approach, the Dutch national action plan includes many joint activities that benefit from the complementarity between Government bodies and civil society in the Netherlands and their partner organizations in the focus countries. I would like to mention a few examples in that regard.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Netherlands will support the national women's fund in promoting Congolese women's participation in the coming elections. We will also support women in the eastern part of the country who can play a mediation role in the conflict that is still raging in the Kivus. Similarly, in Burundi as well as in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the signatories to the Dutch national action plan will support a regional organization programme that will cooperate with local women's and media organizations to increase public support for women's political participation and to strengthen the capacity of women's organizations to campaign, including by using media technologies.

In Afghanistan, a group of signatories is working with a local telephone and Internet provider to start a programme connecting poor rural women and men with more modern youth in the main towns via an SMS platform, using SMS-based blogging. The objective is to keep the rural poor better informed on national women's issues and to foster dialogue between rural poor and urban youth. In Libya, we support a capacity- building programme to enable women to make a meaningful contribution to the development of the new constitution.

The Dutch Government also attaches a high priority to the financial implementation of its second national action plan. An amount of €2 million is available annually for the period 2012-2015 for programmes in the six partner countries, with the same amount reserved for the Middle East and North Africa regions. Last year, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women fund (FLOW), the largest women's fund in the world. Between 2012 and 2015 FLOW will invest €78 million in women's organizations, many of them in conflict-affected areas. Finally, a new fund is being established with the Dutch NGO HIVOS and the accounting firm of PriceWaterhouseCoopers to strengthen the financial and organizational management of women's organizations in the Middle East and North Africa regions. In that way, we hope to be able to share and support the commitments made during the Equal Futures Partnership event hosted by United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton last month.

In conclusion, the potential role of women's organizations in any social or political transformation is huge. Women can and should play a pivotal role in their societies, and they deserve our support in helping them to take the lead more effectively. Transition processes like the ones in the North Africa region are an opportunity for women to translate their influence into formal roles. The same is true for women and their organizations working in fragile countries. Women

across the world involved in peacebuilding, reconciliation and democratization will continue to find the Netherlands at their side.