

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict-Affected Situations, October 18th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ms. Brigitte Balipou, speaking on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security

Mr. President, UN Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Security Council. I speak today on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.¹ I am also here in my capacity as a magistrate in the Central African Republic, board Member of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), and Founding Member of the Women Lawyer Association of the Central African Republic. The NGO Working Group welcomes the Secretary-General's report on women, peace and security, which provides clear analysis and data on progress, but also on remaining gaps and challenges, in implementing resolution 1325. We would also like to welcome Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the new Executive Director of UN Women.

I bring you greetings from the Central African Republic, which has experienced two decades of crisis that has undermined unity and national cohesion. Since March 24, 2013 the security situation has spiraled into full-blown conflict that has impacted the entire civilian population, particularly women and girls who have been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence on a wide scale, and children who have been recruited as child soldiers. We live in fear. We are being killed indiscriminately in large numbers, we have been impacted by rampant looting, we lack food and supplies, our children have not been able to go to school since March, and our country is being destroyed. CAR needs urgent security and humanitarian intervention. Our human rights are being violated in full view of the international community.

The UN Security Council has taken important steps today to fully implement its resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, with this new resolution laying out key commitments regarding women's participation. It is clear to our civil society colleagues doing the implementing work of women, peace and security on a daily basis that women's participation in all processes regarding peace and security – particularly conflict prevention, resolution, post-conflict reconstruction – is where large implementation challenges remain.

It is time to dismantle the barriers to women's full and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making. It is time, thirteen years after the unanimous adoption of resolution 1325, for the consistent resourcing and sustained political will to support women's deserved role in preventing, ending, and rebuilding from conflicts like those that are currently plaguing my own country of the Central African Republic. We women of CAR demand full involvement in peace negotiation processes. It is time to ensure accountability for women's rights and effective responses to women's protection concerns. These calls are echoed by women in Syria, in Afghanistan, in Myanmar, in Colombia, in Libya, in the Democratic Republic of Congo – in virtually every community affected by conflict.

To support the full implementation of resolution 1325, and to ensure that this implementation reflects the full scope of the women, peace and security agenda, today I will address the following key points, regarding justice, conflict prevention, demilitarization and disarmament, and security sector reform, and comprehensive multisectoral responses.

¹ The NGOWG is comprised of Amnesty International; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarité; Global Action to Prevent War; Global Justice Center; Human Rights Watch; The Institute for Inclusive Security; International Action Network on Small Arms; International Alert; International Rescue Committee; Refugees International; International Women's Program of the Open Society Foundations; Social Science Research Council; Women's Refugee Commission; Women's Action for New Directions; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

First, Justice

The theme of today's debate in the UN Security Council, "Women, rule of law and transitional justice in conflict-affected situations," is one of great importance in my own country of Central African Republic. Such justice is rooted in efforts to bring peace, and includes ensuring peace agreements and legislation do not contain amnesties for crimes against women. It is achieved through ensuring increased gender parity in transitional justice systems, including reconciliation, and ensuring women's political participation as both voters and political candidates. All of these efforts should ensure provision of reparations for crimes under international law, including those that seek to transform gender inequalities, not perpetuate them. This in turn depends on issues such as non-discrimination, equal citizenship rights for women, access to safe public transportation, the effective delivery of basic services such as water and electricity, and effective and gender-sensitive witness and victim protection programs. Due to the conflict, our justice system in CAR has essentially been destroyed, making it impossible for someone like me, a magistrate, to serve the people, and it is currently impossible for women to access justice. The justice infrastructure needs to be rebuilt, those who are committing violations need to be held accountable, and resources must be allocated to enable the documentation of crimes.

Second, Conflict prevention

Conflict prevention lies at the core of the women, peace and security agenda, and the maintenance of international peace and security. This means addressing core causes of conflict, such as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, sharp inequalities between groups or the lack of protection for their own population. Without strengthened investment in women's human rights, equality, education, and women-led civil society, we will not see sustainable peace. In CAR, it is critical that the root causes of conflict are addressed and that rising religious tensions are reversed through dialogue. We call for full participation of women civil society in the planning process of the presidential and legislative elections to be held in 2015.

Third, Demilitarization and Disarmament, and Security Sector Reform

Related to conflict prevention is a necessary stronger focus on demilitarization. Traditional security areas, such as disarmament and demobilization, and security sector reform, must be fully accessible and responsive to women. We ask that this be taken into consideration in the planned deployment of African Union peacekeeping troops to CAR and any other additional forces.

Finally, Multisectoral Response

The entire CAR population is critically in need of humanitarian assistance and a security environment that makes this assistance possible. In communities ravaged by conflict, humanitarian responses must be mobilized in line with international humanitarian law and established good practice, with women and girls included in the design, delivery and evaluation of programs. This is important to ensure their safety through the implementation of effective protection and prevention measures; to ensure they are able to access necessary services, particularly for at-risk groups; and to advance women's leadership at all levels, including in displacement settings. Comprehensive multisectoral responses, with necessary funding, including the full range of medical, legal, psychosocial and livelihood services, are crucial for women's empowerment in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Mr. President, UN Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, implementation of resolution 1325 is too urgent to wait. Women's groups must be engaged as key partners in peace, mediation, negotiation, and governmental processes. Women's rights must be prioritized by implementing national and regional action plans for resolution 1325, regularly meeting with women's groups and women leaders, and by ensuring you are substantively incorporating women's priorities into all relevant negotiations. We call on you to make these priorities non-negotiable. Political and financial resources must be allocated to women's civil society organizations, and the principles of Security Council resolution 1325 must be embedded in the post-2015 development goals and indicators.

I appeal to the Security Council that CAR does not become a forgotten conflict and call for swift action. One day of inaction is one day of too many lives lost.

Finally, we call on Members of the Security Council to be role models by consistently and fully implementing Security Council resolution 1325.

Thank you.