

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security- 23 October 2007**  
**Extract Verbatim Transcript / English S/PV.5766**

**Panama**

**Mr. Arias** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): May I first of all thank the delegation of Ghana for convening this meeting. I am grateful to the Secretary-General for his significant presentation and to Ms. Mayanja, Ms. Sandler, Ms. Torry and Mr. Guéhenno for their important briefings, which objectively describe the successes and challenges relating to women and peace and security and also in particular the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

The Security Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) was an important milestone for this Organization. It recognizes, inter alia, the valuable contribution of women in the prevention and settlement of conflicts, as well as in peacebuilding. Nonetheless, in spite of the progress made in the implementation of this resolution, a great deal remains to be done. This is why the Security Council, the Secretary-General and other United Nations forums must continue to support Member States in adopting policies and establishing national programmes and plans that are aimed at its implementation. The Organization must do likewise within its administration. In this context, Panama wishes to welcome the appointment of Ambassador Ellen Margrethe Løj as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia.

As for the Republic of Panama, while we must not disregard progress made in the implementation of all the aspects of this resolution, it is equally true that today we are confronting situations that directly affect women and girls that require our immediate attention and action. Obviously, we refer to the persistent scourge of sexual violence in situations that are on the Security Council's agenda. Consideration of the reports from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, as well as from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, inter alia, oblige us to refer specifically to these situations in this debate.

The systematic rape of women and children who are simply going about their daily activities is only one segment of the challenge facing women in certain regions of the world. At the present time, the rise in the use of sexual violence against women as a tool of war has reached a truly alarming stage. In spite of its recurrence, the lack of public order and the situation of insecurity prevent State bodies from protecting women from being victims of this violence.

In the face of this problem, the Security Council and the entire Organization must reflect on more effective measures to prevent sexual violence in all cases and particularly in the aforementioned tragic situations. As part of its consideration, the Council could re-evaluate the effectiveness and the scope of the mandates of some peacekeeping operations, with a view to ensuring the presence of its components in these areas of repeated attacks. Furthermore, care of the victims must be part of the joint efforts of the Security Council and the rest of the Organization. Ensuring access to psychological, social and health support, including free and confidential HIV/AIDS screening and, where necessary, treatment, is a key part of this work. At the same time, little can be achieved without education of the people; and, therefore, States, with the needed support, must conduct awarenessraising campaigns on the subject of sexual violence.

Lastly, and as is universally agreed, justice is the main guarantor of human rights. The lack of the rule of law only results in a collapse of public order, in insecurity and in conflict. Consequently, the detention and prosecution of those guilty of using sexual

violence as a tool of war is something that this body must emphasize repeatedly. In this context, we support the efforts of the International Criminal Court to prosecute those who are guilty of this crime against humanity.

The Security Council's capacity to react effectively to this challenge depends on the quality, credibility and relevance of the information it receives. More information on sexual violence with empirical data, broken down by gender, must form part of the reports considered by this Security Council. This will help us understand how and why this phenomenon exists. It will also help define more effective strategies to combat it. This is why the Republic of Panama hopes and trusts that, as of now, the Secretariat will include in its reports to the Council more details relating to this grave violation of the rights of women.

In conclusion, may I reiterate my own country's well-known position that in order to put an end to the cycle of violence against women, which exists both in peacetime and in wartime, it is necessary to promote, inter alia, women's active participation in all aspects of political, socio-economic and cultural life. This must be the ongoing commitment of our countries and of the United Nations system.