

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

*Statement by Mr. Moura, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations*

I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on women and peace and security, an issue to which Portugal attaches great importance. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General; the Under- Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay; and Ms. Brigitte Balipou for their very enlightening statements.

Portugal of course shares the views that have been expressed by the observer of the European Union regarding the matter of the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict-affected situations. However, allow me to expand on some aspects of political significance for my country.

It is increasingly evident that the rule of law is all too often the second victim of conflict, the first victims being women and girls. Portugal reaffirms the view that women and girls are disproportionately affected by armed conflicts and remain particularly vulnerable in post-conflict situations. Sexual and gender-based violence, child and forced marriages and disruption in education, to name but a few of the facts of conflict, are magnified when it comes to women and girls. The Security Council has repeatedly acknowledged that fact and must continue to act on such a basis. On the other hand, there is a tendency to consider transitional justice as the second-to-last concern of peace agreements, the last being the participation of women in peace agreements.

It is our firm belief that only through the systematic and active participation of women in peace processes can transitional justice truly assume a national dimension and lay the foundations for rebuilding the rule of law and reconciliation. We have been witnessing the very important role women can play in reconciliation processes when they are included from the outset.

Portugal feels particularly encouraged by the rising awareness regarding those issues, and by the efforts made at the United Nations and national levels to increase expertise in several areas, such as mediation and capacity-building for the political participation of women, whether as candidates, electoral observers or office holders.

With regard to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, we also find encouraging examples of clearer political will and adequate allocation of resources aimed at increasing the proportion of women in uniformed components in operations and in national security sector institutions.

The Council has heard, on a regular basis and directly from the ground, requests for further strengthening the implementation of protection mandates. We hope that the targets set by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of 20 per cent for female police participation in peacekeeping operations by 2014 will be attained. Portugal continues to develop policies to promote the recruitment and retention of women in the military and in the police forces, and looks forward to cooperate further in training and in sharing good practices with other troop and police-contributing countries.

Let me conclude by stressing the role of the economic, social and cultural rights of women as a central component of protection. Portugal strongly supports the inclusion of this subject in the Secretary- General's latest report (S/2013/525). These issues belong at the forefront of our discussions on women and peace and security and we commend his effort to do so. Further analysis of the relationship between the stability of livelihoods and the safety of women and girls is therefore, from our point of view, crucial. We encourage the United Nations to continue to give it due attention.