

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security**  
**28<sup>th</sup> of October 2011, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by H.E. Ambassador José Filipe Moraes Cabral, Representative of Portugal*

Madam President,

I wish to thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on an issue to which Portugal attaches great importance.

I would also like to thank the Secretary General, Madam Michelle Bachelet, Ambassador Lazarus Kapambwe and Ms. Orzala Ashraf Nemat for their very useful statements.

The theme of this year's open debate "women's participation in conflict prevention and mediation" was a core element of the resolution that was adopted by this Council eleven years ago. But as underlined in the excellent report of the Secretary General which we very much welcome, this objective still eludes us to a large extent. This is therefore a very timely debate.

Portugal, naturally, shares the content of the statement of the European Union to be delivered later today.

Madam President,

Women are indispensable actors of change and development. The Arab Spring is a stage for the active participation of women in political processes. Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan women have, today, higher and legitimate expectations than in the past regarding their role in the shaping of their countries' future. Women who have strived to make their voices heard, who have played a important role in promoting political transitions, are now looking forward to full and equal participation in the political sphere and to contribute actively to the stability, progress and cohesion of their societies.

Women have indeed a crucial role to play in rebuilding war torn societies and in preserving social cohesion. They did it in Europe during and after two World Wars, they did it in South America and they did it in Africa in countries divided by civilian strife. They still do it on a daily basis in several countries tormented by conflict. What is essential is to guarantee that women are included in peace processes and to ensure that their perspectives, direct knowledge of the concrete situation and concerns are taken into account as important contributions to the re-shaping of torn societies in post –conflict situations and in peacebuilding efforts.

The decision of the Nobel Prize Committee to award the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize to three women in recognition "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work" is a much deserved recognition of women's significant contribution to peacebuilding and democracy. It will undoubtedly send a powerful message to women around the world to engage in determining the future of their countries.

Indeed, while acknowledging that important progress has been accomplished in the implementation of resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolutions on Women Peace and Security, we need to recognize that significant challenges still remain: women are still underrepresented at the several levels of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts as they are inadequately represented in formal peace negotiations. The exclusion of women from peace talks and peacebuilding efforts often means that insufficient attention is paid to addressing gender disparities and women's needs and concerns in the post conflict phase, thus reinforcing a circle of inequality and marginalization.

Madam President,

This Council will adopt a Presidential Statement encouraging efforts to strengthen the capacities of women's organizations to engage in conflict prevention and mediation. Portugal fully supports these specific efforts to increase the effective participation of women mediators in peace processes as well as efforts to prepare women to effectively intervene in the resolution of conflicts and contribute to peace and stability.

In this regard, we welcome UN Women's efforts to give technical support to women's organizations and we recognize that much has been done with success at local and regional level to strengthen women's civil society groups. We also welcome every effort by Member States to promote women's political participation and to eliminate discriminatory or constitutional barriers against women. Further action is also needed on other obstacles that prevent women from participating fully in politics such as poverty, sexual violence, lack of access to education, negative societal attitudes, cultural and psychological barriers.

This Council has also a key role to play in monitoring women's participation in political processes and I would take this opportunity to highlight once again the importance of inviting Michelle Bachelet to brief the Council on women's political participation in concrete situations in the agenda of the Council to complement the briefings that the Council receives from other parts of the Secretariat. We congratulate her warmly for the for the very important work she is carrying out, for her leadership and commitment and we wish here to reiterate our full support to her endeavours.

To conclude, Madam President, Portugal has been striving to support the promotion and protection of the human rights of women but also women's political participation in situations in the agenda of the Council like in Libya, Somalia, South Sudan or in Afghanistan among others. This Council cannot afford to exclude the skills and talents of half of the world's population in the pursuit of peace. In this context, my country reaffirms its commitment to ensuring women's effective participation in peace and security and to translate this commitment into enhanced action.

I thank you for your attention.