

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

Statement by Mr. Jose Filipe Moraes, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on Women, Peace and Security, an issue to which Portugal attaches great importance.

I also thank the Under Secretary General Jan Eliasson, the Executive Director of UN Women Michelle Bachelet and Under Secretary General Hervé Ladsous as well as Ms. Bineta Diop, President of Femmes Africa Solidarité, for their very useful briefings.

This open debate, Mr. President, is an excellent and timely opportunity for the Council to express its strong support for the efforts of individual women and women's networks and organizations that are doing so much for peace and security from the grassroots to the international level. Portugal naturally aligns itself with the statement of the European Union that will be made later on.

Mr. President,

Women are important and indispensable actors of change and development. The Council has recognized that their active participation in political processes and in the discussions over their own countries' future is extremely valuable and should be mandatory with the approval resolution 1325 and subsequent Council resolutions on this issue. Women undeniably play a crucial role in rebuilding post conflict societies and social cohesion. It is therefore essential to guarantee that women are included in peace processes from their early phases and to ensure that their perspectives, direct knowledge and concerns are taken into account by the international and local actors in shaping peacebuilding efforts. It is also essential to ensure that women's organizations and their leaders get the necessary support and encouragement from the international community to continue their work. The Council can and should play an important and active role in this regard.

Mr. President,

During the past two years in the Council, Portugal has been working not only to support the promotion and protection of the rights of women but also to support women's political participation in situations in the agenda of the Council, be it in Libya, Somalia, South Sudan or in Afghanistan. We have also encouraged more interaction between the Council and women mediators that have a direct and personal experience of engaging women and engaging with women, in mediation and conflict prevention.

In an Arria formula meeting that we co-organized with the UK, we heard very useful testimonies from experienced mediators, with a direct and personal experience of engaging women in conflict prevention as well as on ways and means to enhance their participation in peace processes.

Likewise, we also had opportunities to meet with several gender advisers from UN peacekeeping missions and learned from them about the extremely valuable work that they have been doing to support the political participation of women in countries like Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, Timor Leste or Haiti and to implement the broader Women Peace and Security mandates. We believe that the Council only has to gain with organizing more of these meetings in order to have direct information from women and women's organizations regarding prevention of conflicts and post war consolidation and reconstruction, as essential elements for the full implementation of resolution 1325.

In this regard, let me also underline the importance of keeping up the practice of organizing meetings with civil society when the Council travels in a field mission; we especially recall in this regard the important meeting in Sierra Leone or in Timor Leste for the powerful messages that civil society passed to Council members.

Another key aspect of the Council's work in the implementation of resolution 1325 is its monitoring of women's participation in political processes in post-conflict situations. In this context, it is important to invite USG Michelle Bachelet (as it was done during the past 2 years) to regularly brief the Council on women's political participation in concrete situations in its agenda. These briefings not only complement the briefings that the Council receives from other Secretariat representatives but they help the Council in the implementation of the women peace and security mandate.

Mr. President,

Indeed, important progress has been accomplished in the implementation of resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolutions on Women Peace and Security. Nevertheless, we have to recognize that significant challenges still remain namely in order to ensure an adequate representation of women and women's groups in formal peace processes and to benefit fully from their knowledge and experience.

Mr. President,

This Council has adopted a Presidential Statement encouraging efforts to strengthen the capacities of women's organizations to engage in conflict prevention and mediation. Portugal strongly supports these specific efforts by Members States and the UN. In this regard, we welcome DPKO and UN Women's efforts to give technical support to women's organizations at local and regional level to strengthen women's civil society groups. The PRST also recognizes that those who protect the human rights of women are very often placed in situation of serious risk and calls for Members States to address these risks. In this regard, we pay tribute to human rights defenders that fight for women's human rights in so many parts of the world in extremely difficult conditions and we appeal for their adequate protection.

Every effort must be made to promote women's full and equal participation in electoral processes, as candidates and as voters, and to eliminate discriminatory or legal barriers against women's participation. Lack of access to education but also the fight against violence and in particular sexual violence should also be addressed in this context.

Mr President, I conclude,

Resolution 1325 is a powerful message to encourage women around the world, in countries at war and countries in peace, to engage in the future of their countries and in the promotion of peace and security. In this regard, Portugal remains fully committed to this objective and engaged in enhancing action at the national and international level to fulfil these goals. As was mentioned here today, we must go the extra mile, with UN Women, the UN System as a whole and with civil society. Let's do it!

I thank you for your attention.