

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security – 29 October 2008**  
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**RWANDA**

**Mr. Nsengimana** (Rwanda): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to participate in this open debate on women and peace and security, and wishes to express our appreciation to the delegation of the People's Republic of China for convening it. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2008/622) on women and peace and security, which offers an assessment of the state of implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the challenges that remain.

I also would like to thank the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Ms. Rachel Mayanja; Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alain Le Roy; the Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Ms. Inés Alberdi; and Ms. Sarah Taylor, Coordinator of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their fruitful and comprehensive interventions on the present situation of women regarding peace and security.

The genocide in Rwanda in 1994 witnessed some of the most inhumane acts of violence targeted at women and girls and the use of sexual violence as a tactic of genocide. The survivors of the genocide continue to live with the consequences of those crimes almost 15 years later. The perpetrators of these heinous crimes, the ex-forces armées rwandaises and interahamwe, now the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), have been a main cause of regional insecurity in the Great Lakes region since 1994 and continue to be a major factor in the current situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The FDLR continues to commit war crimes, crimes against humanity and numerous other human rights violations in the Great Lakes region.

Many regional and international agreements and instruments provide commendable mechanisms to deal with the threat posed by FDLR, but little or no attempt has been made to translate them into action. It is imperative that those agreements be put into action promptly to enable a lasting solution to the problem, which further threatens women in the Great Lakes region.

The equal participation of women in the promotion of peace and security in both conflict and post-conflict situations is integral to any peacekeeping, peacemaking or peacebuilding process. It is in that context that my Government has set out to ensure that women are central to the political, economic and social governance of our nation. Women today hold 56 per cent of seats in Parliament; head the Foreign, Information and Education Ministries, among others; head the police force and participate in peacekeeping missions; and hold command positions in the armed forces.

The participation of women in the maintenance and promotion of peace can begin to manifest itself only through sheer political will. The Government of Rwanda has made it abundantly clear that governance without the participation of more than of half the population is not governance.

Rwanda is a major troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping operations

and has a vested interest in preventing sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Therefore, the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) considers gender-based violence and violence against women to be main components of the security threat. In that respect, the gender desk at Rwanda Defence Headquarters devises training programmes with the support of UNIFEM to raise awareness of gender-based violence and violence against women in the armed forces.

Awareness of and training in how to respond to gender-based violence and violence against women has now been mainstreamed into the curriculum of all of Rwanda's military schools and training institutions and is integral to the preparation of all RDF battalions preparing for peacekeeping missions abroad. The participation of Rwandan policewomen in peacekeeping missions in the Sudan has further ensured that they raise awareness among the population in support of their missions.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report calling for an increase in resources and support to Governments in conflict or post-conflict situations to ensure the increased participation of women in the maintenance and promotion of peace. We also look forward to the establishment of a strengthened and consolidated United Nations gender entity. My Government therefore reiterates its support for the continued implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and will remain a strong advocate for the participation of women in all aspects of governance.