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(PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Thank you Mr. President for giving me the floor. My delegation joins its voice to congratulate you for calling this debate on "*Women and peace and security*". We also appreciate statements made earlier by Angela King and Mrs. Heiser. We are happy to share thoughts on this from the President of the Republic of Rwanda, H.E. Paul Kagame and other members of the Cabinet especially the Honorable Angelina Muganza Minister for Gender and Women in Development who all strongly speak out in favor of empowering women for a durable peace and sustainable development. Peace is a prerequisite for sustainable development and women do have a lot to offer.

Mr. President,

In most African traditional and modern societies throughout the world, solidarity with one another has been the best chance for peace and security. Such a solidarity is gradually shaped and built from early days of our lives and we owe this acquisition to mothers -and fathers of course- whoever you may be and wherever you may be from. The focal point for all family life is the wife, the mother, "the she citizen" of the world. Unfortunately, what she generously prepares and gives is not always what she gets in return when wars and calamities break out. Time is right for her to have a say on this at all levels and in all institutions.

All hardships and abuses befall her but she never gives up. Stories of Rwanda are there to teach us all that, when political and ethnic tensions cause conflict, women have come as one to suggest building bridges rather than walls. The Security Council should help women in knocking walls down and building bridges between people and cultures. In post-genocide Rwanda, women still carry the burden of responsibility and care of their children, orphans, the elderly and husbands in prisons. Women have assumed the entire role of being "breadwinners" and are shouldering multiple challenges despite the fact that 54% are illiterate and the majority of them living below the poverty line.

Mr. President,

Those who widowed women in Rwanda, in Burundi and in the Balkans, those who raped them and left them with infections, diseases and marks of all sorts including unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS are still at large and active, killing and raping more women and girls across the borders in DRC, in Burundi and elsewhere under the silence of many who otherwise should arrest them according to several Security Council Resolutions and the Convention we all signed. Instead, these criminals curiously still enjoy the world's attention, especially those in Arusha and in Rwanda's prisons or in big cities of the world. In DRC, they cease to be what they are, i.e. criminal rapists and killers the day they accept to join

the ranks of Kabila forces and his allies who are creating more havoc when peace and security are at stake. And this body looks powerless to take timely and decisive action.

Mr. President,

Adding insult onto injury, the agony is still not over for those women victims of rape as a weapon of genocide. As witnesses at the International Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, they are indeed compelled to tell their stories to all male judges or environments. More attention should be also drawn on this situation and swiftly addressed by the Council if peace and security is for all, including women victims of rape as a weapon of genocide. Let competent women and there are many be recruited and do the job. We cannot accept double standards even if we have to live with them.

Let my delegation reiterate that the presence of such criminals in DRC continues to be a threat to the security of our people and to our sovereignty. Rwanda is in DRC to stop them from killing and raping more innocent women and children. Rwanda is there to get them back and many of those taken hostages. Rwanda does it within the Lusaka Agreement framework as negotiated, agreed by all parties, welcomed by the Council and not changed by any UN resolution so far as wrongly stated by the DRC representative. In September alone, we have been blessed to get over 17,000 of our people (women, children and men) from DRC back to Rwanda and we will continue to get them back where they belong and within the law. The international community should encourage and contribute to this as genuine search for peace and security rather than keeping quiet and dwelling on non-priority issues. We take this opportunity to thank the UNHCR for assistance given to us and to the returnees who are reintegrating their societies as over a million others did since November 1996.

Against all this picture of continued inaction by the international community and this body in particular towards DRC, Rwanda and the region, women have come together to form associations nationally and regionally and with the facilitation from our government have established women councils and elected their representatives from the village to the national level for the first time ever in the history of Rwanda. Peace building is high on the agenda of women in their various development activities. We encourage them to continue because they are right and it is the right thing to do. Women have indeed understood that there is no possible development activity if there is no peace home and across our borders. Such peace and security are the prime responsibility of this body and women have a right to be involved especially where, we, men have failed. And they have proved they can do it. Let us associate them and empower them.

Mr. President,

Namibia has done a great job towards advocacy for women and we once again congratulate your country and leadership for this. Rwanda on her part, has hosted two international conferences on women and peace. The first one entitled "Peace, Gender and Development" was organized in March 1997 and the "Kigali Action Plan" was adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the OAU, Organization for African Unity. The second one was held in June this year and entitled "*Women as Partners for Peace in Africa*" organized with grateful thanks to the current distinguished Ambassador of the United States to Rwanda and his broader team to whom we express our sincere thanks and congratulations. Conclusions and recommendations of all these

conferences be it in Kampala, Dakar, Johannesburg, Kigali or Windhoek should be translated into action to make sure that women get what they deserve and when due.

In a bid to promote peace and security, Rwandan women have undertaken various other important activities that are worth mentioning and that could be learned from:

1. The launching of a program called "Action Campaign for Peace" by Pro-Femme Twese Hamwe", an umbrella organization that brings together Rwanda women NGOs
2. Building of a peace village by an association, ASOFERWA, that supports genocide widows. It is dedicated to and named after the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela
3. It is through such peace initiatives that UNESCO awarded Rwandan women a Prize for Peace and Tolerance in 1997
4. In a bid to contribute in the area of resolving conflicts and promoting peace in the region, Rwanda hosted the international conference I earlier referred to under the auspices of the OAU and the ECA.

Mr. President,

This Rwandan experience and many others in the region and beyond speak to this Council and should be listened to. In search for peace and security for all, one of the best strategies for conflict prevention is to expand the role of women as peace-makers from the village council in the hinterland of any given country, member of this organization, to this very Chamber where peace and security are supposed to be insured for all, without any distinction. The distance to cover sounds too long but very sure for all to reach the final objective if we empower women and take them on board.

As rightly expressed by H.E. President Kagame on June 25, 2000 when opening the conference on "Women as partners for Peace" and I quote: "the twentieth century failed to acknowledge the role of women in conflict resolution and the search for peace. Yet everybody knows that when there is war, the heaviest toll falls on women and children. It is now time to bridge this gap because without the involvement of our mothers, sisters and daughters within and outside our borders, we cannot find lasting peace. For a long time, women have been relegated to the periphery of political activities. Governments have to put in place policy instruments and institutions which will enable women to play an important role in the area of peace, reconciliation and conflict resolution... It is not only wars that undermine peace. Human rights abuses, social injustice, poverty and bad governance are some of the factors that should be examined in order to tackle conflict on several fronts" end of quote.

Mr. President,

In concluding, the Rwanda Government's commitment to increase participation of women in creating and promoting peace should guide this Council and its membership to adequately address the issue of peace and security by involving women. They have experiences to share and a clear strong will to destroy all myths and prejudices around and against them. The Council needs to be gender sensitive as many of us here have become but also and especially act towards bringing women around negotiating tables and help us to reach lasting peace and security we have been longing for. I thank you.

Ambassador Joseph W. Mutaboba
Permanent Representative of Rwanda