

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 28 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr. Sangqu, Representative of South Africa

My delegation would like to express its sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Michelle Bachelet, Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe in his capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council, and Ms. Nemat, speaking on behalf of the NGO Working Group On Women, Peace and Security, for their statements. We also appreciate the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General in this debate.

South Africa welcomes the convening of this important meeting. The adoption of the historic resolution 1325 (2000) 11 years ago was a significant milestone in the recognition of the role that women can play in the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly in decision-making processes relating to conflict prevention and resolution. In light of that achievement, South Africa is encouraged by the various frameworks that have been created to ensure the implementation of that resolution, in particular the creation of UN-Women under the leadership of Ms. Michele Bachelet.

Those positive developments are pivotal for advancing the agenda of women, peace and security. It will allow for this important issue to be consistently placed at the top of the agenda of the United Nations system, and lead to increased coordination in policy programming for women and girls within the United Nations system.

Indeed, inroads have been made in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/598*). However, let us be clear that gaps remain in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), as well as glaring disparities pertaining to the role of women in preventive diplomacy, formal peace processes and mediation. We therefore welcome the institutional and policy frameworks elaborated in the Secretary-General's report, in particular his seven point action plan for gender-responsive peacebuilding, which seeks to establish standard operating procedures for gender issues in the United Nations, conflict resolution and peacebuilding architecture.

We further welcome the practical recommendations and the strategic results framework outlined in the Secretary-General's report, which constitute a concrete proposal to include women in conflict prevention and mediation. In particular, we wish to highlight the importance of nominating women to lead negotiation processes and increasing the number of women in the foreign services and security establishments.

Equally, the proposal to increase the number of women police and troops in United Nations missions is highly desirable in addressing the specific needs of women in conflict and post-conflict countries.

In that regard, South Africa is among the States with the highest representation of women across all spheres of Government. Women are also at the helm of ministries in the fields of international relations, cooperation and defence. In the area of peacekeeping, we have deployed gender mainstreaming officers in positions of command in peacekeeping missions to ensure that issues related to women are addressed. In addition, we are one of the top

three troop-contributing countries with the largest contingent of women in peacekeeping missions.

In the recent past, South African women held the position of Deputy Police Commissioner in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. We believe that the presence of women in peacekeeping missions positively benefits local women and girls, including other vulnerable groups in countries in, and emerging from, conflict.

Based on its past experience, South Africa is conscious of the centrality of women as peacemakers and facilitators in political processes and peacebuilding initiatives, particularly at the grass-roots level. Women at all levels of society have a role to play in conflict prevention and peacebuilding as agents of change. In that regard, South African Women in Dialogue has been actively engaged with women's organizations in countries such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan in sharing experiences and lessons learned with women in States emerging from conflict.

South Africa continues to contribute to popularizing the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) through structures such as the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and the Pan-African Women's Organization. To that end, South Africa recently held the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa Summit on Women, Peace and Security in May.

Indeed, in congratulating the three outstanding women who were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this year, President Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, her compatriot Ms. Leymah Gbowee and Ms. Tawakkul Karman of Yemen, President Jacob Zuma underscored the important contribution that women continue to play in their ongoing struggle for women's rights, dignity, peace and development all over the world. The vast majority of women are not involved in creating wars, but they remain the primary victims of war and conflict. Long after the guns have ceased blazing, their children and families continue to suffer the devastating effects of the aftermath of conflict. Women are the ones left to pick up the pieces and to rebuild families and their communities.

Women also suffer disproportionately from poverty. An important dimension in advancing peace and preventing conflict is to ensure greater and more equitable economic justice and development. Despite advances in positioning women to assume leadership roles in conflict prevention and mediation, those advances will be meaningless if the root causes of conflict, which are by and large developmental in nature, are not sufficiently addressed.

In conclusion, as members of the Security Council, we should encourage the incorporation of a gender perspective of preventative diplomacy initiatives in our mandate renewals. That could be achieved, first, through the effective utilization of women as mediators, including through the good offices of the Secretary-General; secondly, by increasing the number of women Special Representatives, thirdly, by making the utmost use of the gender expertise resident in UN-Women; and fourthly, by incorporating the gender perspective in the work of Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

Finally, South Africa welcomes the adoption of the draft presidential statement before us.