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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT
BY
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AT THE
OPEN DEBATE
ON
WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2007

Mr. President,

South Africa would also like to commend Ghana for organizing the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security. My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be read by Zambia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

It is indeed seven years since the adoption of resolution 1325. Whilst there has been progress in implementing this resolution, there is still a lot to be done to improve the lives of women, particularly women in conflict affected areas. For this reason, we concur with the Concept Paper presented to us by the Ghanaian delegation that one of the central objectives remains the demand for gender mainstreaming in all its aspects.

Throughout its history, women in South Africa have played a pivotal role in the liberation of our country. In the negotiations for a new South Africa, women were in the forefront in developing a constitutional framework centered on a non-sexist and non-racist policy. From the beginning, South Africans recognized the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all aspects of our lives. As a result, we pride ourselves of having senior women in key Government, business and civil society positions. As South Africa has increased our participation in the international arena, our representatives in regional and international peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts have always included women.

Also, from our experience, we have learned that it is important to build solidarity amongst all role players, particularly women. For example, the South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID) has links with women throughout the world. SAWID collaborated with women from the Great Lakes Region, including women from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Recently, SAWID traveled to Darfur in solidarity with the displaced women of the Sudan.

Despite these efforts, South Africa believes that there is still more work to be done in support of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict societies. Women and girls make up a disproportionate and overwhelming number of victims of violence, particularly gender-based violence. Mothers and girls are the first to be affected in war situations and are among the highest casualties. Those who survive conflict are victimized and traumatized yet again just because they are women.

While the situation of women, particularly in conflict areas, remains desperate and unacceptable, we should resist seeing women only as victims. While women may be the first casualties of conflict, it is also true that women have played, and continue to play, a meaningful role in the recovery and reintegration of families in society. Women have also been among leading policy-makers and have been instrumental in bringing about democracy in some of the post-conflict societies.

On this seventh anniversary of Resolution 1325, my country would like to pay tribute to these women. One of Africa's leaders is President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, who was one of the major contributors to Resolution 1325.

Mr. President,

We also agree that Member States must continually look at measures in strengthening full and effective implementation of Resolution 1325. We believe that full implementation requires the resolve of Member States in forming partnerships with civil society, the private sector and community-based organizations to promote women's rights.

During the negotiations for the drafting of the Rome Statute, South Africa was among the advocates for ensuring that gender-based violence was included in the list of war crimes. When the International Criminal Court (ICC) was created, South Africa presented a woman candidate who has since contributed meaningfully to the ICC's jurisprudence on violence against women in armed conflict. Judge Navi Pillay, a member of the ICC, is a well-known advocate for the protection of women's rights.

Also, South Africa has joined with Sweden and others, in promoting the "Partners for Gender Justice Initiative". The aim of this Initiative is to forge a more coordinated and integrated system of collaboration to assist national stakeholders in achieving gender justice in conflict affected countries. We recently hosted in Cape Town the *Africa Regional Meeting on Gender Justice* for Ministers of Justice and Ministers of Gender at which there was a sharing of experiences on how best to identify gaps, challenges and opportunities to implement Resolution 1325 at the national level. The regional meeting also focused on ways to promote Gender Justice and ensure the participation of women within the legal system. We wish to thank the President of this Council for circulating the report of this Africa Regional Meeting on Gender Justice as a document of the Security Council.

In conclusion, Mr. President,

South Africa believes that there is still more work that needs to be done in addressing the situation of women, peace and security. There is a need for increased participation of women at all levels, particularly in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and in United Nations field operations. More women should be appointed as Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General. For this reason, we commend the Secretary-General for appointing Ambassador Ellen Løj of Denmark as SRSG for Liberia. South Africa remains committed to working within a consultative and collaborative framework to find peaceful resolution to conflicts. To this end, we believe it would be important for women in local communities to be allowed to participate in finding solutions for the reconstruction and rebuilding of their countries. As the ones who are the first to suffer when there is conflict, women often are the ones to know when and how to rebuild the lives of their families and communities.

I thank you.