

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security October 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Hilale, Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations

My delegation would like to warmly thank you, Madam President, for organizing this debate devoted to the topic of women refugees and victims of forced displacement. My delegation would also like to commend Argentina for promoting the issue of the rights of women in the Security Council as one of that country's priorities.

This year is the fourteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) by the Security Council. The resolution acknowledges the contribution of women to peace and security, both at the international and national levels, and promotes their participation in all aspects of conflict resolution as well as in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It also urges all States and United Nations agencies to a wide range of measures to enhance the participation of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and promote the respect and protection of their fundamental rights.

Since 2000, six other resolutions have been adopted by the Security Council aimed at strengthening the normative architecture for protecting the rights of women before, during and after conflicts. These resolutions mark a turning point in the international community's commitment to promoting the participation of women in peace negotiations and send a clear message against the endemic and systematic use of sexual violence as a tactic of war.

Fourteen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), and in spite of the six other Council resolutions, we must nevertheless conclude that there is limited progress in their effective implementation. The report released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on 20 June notes that the number of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons throughout the world has reached a record level for the first time since the end of Second World War — specifically, 51.2 million refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers.

In 2013 there were 32,000 displaced people every day, three quarters of whom were women and children. In addition, the reports reveal that women and girls are increasingly exposed to a lack of basic services, humanitarian aid or even official documents. Those women and girls, in fleeing violence and fighting, find themselves once again exposed to sexual exploitation, rape, prostitution, forced marriage or pregnancy, or forced sterilization. Worse — in the twenty-first century — they are being auctioned off and sold at the slave markets. That is reprehensible.

Morocco strongly condemns such barbaric, brutal and inhumane methods and practices, especially as they have serious consequences for the establishment of peace and lasting reconciliation. Such acts of violence, threats of such acts or incitement to commit them constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian and human rights law and a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions. I would even say they are a crime against humanity, as women make up half of humanity.

Helping those women and girls is a major challenge for the international community, as many of them are in conflict zones where aid is difficult to deliver and they do not have the international protection granted to refugees and internally displaced persons. Applicable international law holds that States have the primary responsibility to respect and ensure the human rights of all persons

within their territory, and it is within their jurisdiction to prevent gender-based violence and respond effectively. At the same time, it is incumbent on the parties to armed conflict to take all possible measures to ensure the protection of civilians and to fulfil their basic needs. Non-State armed groups undoubtedly represent a major challenge, given their responsibility in most of the recent armed conflicts, their involvement in atrocities and massacres of civilians and their appropriation of humanitarian aid resources or commandeering of such resources for the purposes of war.

The Kingdom of Morocco believes that the best protection is based on full respect for refugees' basic rights, regardless of their status. That is a primary, noble and fundamental aspect of human rights, which should be the bedrock of international protection. Those fundamental rights include, on a priority basis, that of free return to the country of origin in safety and dignity and resettlement or integration.

Similarly, registering refugees becomes particularly important in that it allows them to ensure the protection and enjoyment of their fundamental rights. Registration and identification programmes can also have a positive impact on the empowerment of refugee women.

In conclusion, let me highlight the following elements. First, strong political will and total commitment by Member States to the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) will allow for active participation by women in national, regional and international institutions for the prevention, protection and management of conflict situations. Secondly, the militarization of refugee camps is a gross violation of human rights that makes the distinction between combatants and non-combatants difficult and hinders the work of humanitarian actors. Thirdly, women refugees and internally displaced persons should be informed of the fundamental, legal, security and material rights offered by their country of origin. Fourthly, I would highlight the importance of ensuring broad participation by all refugee and internally displaced women in decision-making bodies in refugee or internally displaced communities. Fifthly, there is a need to increase the funding necessary to ensuring comprehensive multisectoral responses, such as the availability of medical and legal of services that are essential for the empowerment of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.