

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

Statement by Mr. Mendonça e Moura, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations

I wish to thank Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, Mr. Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Beyani, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Allami, for their briefings. We also welcome the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2014/21 earlier today.

The role of women in peace and security and the specific impact of the lack of peace and security on women have only recently attracted consistent attention from the highest international decision-making bodies. Yet the progress made is very significant. Such progress has led to a better comprehension of the sources of conflict, as well as of the paths towards peace and reconstruction. It has also led to the orientation of resources towards a deeper knowledge of the consequences of conflicts and better institution- and capacity-building with regard to the role and the empowerment of women.

Turning to the matter at hand, I would like to congratulate Argentina, and the Security Council at large, on the choice of the subject for today's open debate. It is a subject of cruel pertinence. This year, we have reached the highest number of refugees and internally displaced persons since the Second World War. Unfortunately, we must expect the situation to worsen before it improves. New reasons to expect further displacement are emerging at an alarming rate. State and non-State sponsored violence, often tinged with religious extremism, targets civilians, in particular women and girls. Disease generates panic and the disruption of economic and social networks and is itself fanned by further displacement, misinformation and fear. The short- and long-term impact of mass displacement requires no further description. Nonetheless, it requires mutual cooperation and concerted action by all stakeholders. However unprecedented and unconventional today's conflicts may appear, they nevertheless have well-known, traditional and destructive effects on the civilian population, in particular those at the greatest risk: women and girls.

Portugal is encouraged by several very positive developments as regards women and peace and security, such as the fact that this issue is a consistent feature in Security Council resolutions and peacekeeping mandates, as well as the fact that gender-sensitive reporting is now understood as a fundamental element for a thorough understanding of a given situation. We are proud to have worked towards such mainstreaming, together with many partners within the Security Council during our recent mandate on the Council, as well as with the wider membership of the United Nations, thereby fulfilling pledges assumed before our election to this body. A very special word of thanks and encouragement must also go to the non-governmental organizations and civil society community, which has been of invaluable support and generosity in its advocacy.

At the multilateral, regional and national levels, we should also welcome the fact that organizations such as the African Union and NATO have named special envoys for women and peace and security and that an increasing number of countries have developed national action plans to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and its successors. It is now necessary to sustain and develop the progress already achieved. The Security Council, as well as the entire United Nations system, must maintain its commitment to that agenda. In that regard, Portugal welcomes the expanding focus on sexual violence in conflict. Sexual violence is a scourge that affects directly and indirectly generations of victims of conflict.

Our work on this matter strengthens the broader women and peace and security agenda and underlines the need to further empower women politically and economically. The year 2015 will provide a unique political opportunity for the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda. The high-level review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the global study requested in resolution 2122 (2013), as well as the celebrations of Beijing+20 and the discussions of the post-2015 development agenda, will all take place. All of us will have a renewed chance to make our policies on that matter more tangible.

Let me conclude with a specific call to action by drawing the Council's attention to the goal that the High Commissioner for Refugees has set: to eliminate statelessness worldwide by 2024. Statelessness is widely recognized as a source of injustice, discrimination, marginalization and life-long stigma for millions of individuals. It perpetuates the tragic effects of conflict, forced displacement and migration. The discrimination against women in nationality laws is a widespread and grave source of statelessness. Women are particularly victimized in that instance not only because of gender-based discrimination but also because they can be perceived as the source of discrimination from which their children and extended families suffer, often with pervasive, devastating effects. It is high time that the matter be addressed at the highest level with a view to its complete eradication.

I take this opportunity to call on all countries that have not yet done so to accede to or ratify the 1954 Convention relating to Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the key legal instruments and fundamental elements for the prevention of international conflicts and for the mitigation of their effects.