

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security

October 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ms. González Román, Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations

I would like to thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women; Mr. Chaloka Beyani, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; and Ms. Suaad Allami, Director of the Sadr City Women's Centre and Legal Clinic, who gave us the perspective of civil society.

We would also like to align ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

We would like to thank Argentina for organizing this debate. We commend you, Madam President, for focusing this year's open debate on the special situation of displaced women and refugees.

This year, which marks the highest number of refugees displaced since the Second World War, we believe it is more important than ever to recall that half of them are women and girls and that the extremism we are witnessing today in certain parts of the world will perhaps increase those numbers exponentially. That is reflected in today's presidential statement (S/PRST/2014/21), which Spain welcomes.

Displacement is in and of itself an exacerbation of the vulnerability of, and discrimination against, women and girls who are deprived from a safe family environment. In the majority of cases, they have to assume the functions of the head of household, for which their social and cultural circumstances and education have not prepared them. Displacement also increases the vulnerability of women and girls in the face of threats emanating from trafficking networks, recruitment by armed groups, forced marriage, statelessness, prostitution and sexual violence. Forced disappearances also make it impossible to enjoy one's basic rights, such as the right to education and the right to appropriate sanitation.

Throughout recent years we have noted with satisfaction that the Security Council has been increasingly proactive and focused when it comes to women in armed conflict. However, it is important to bear in mind that the main responsibility for protecting displaced persons is on the shoulders of the States, which have an obligation to adopt whatever steps are needed to prevent the weakening of the basic rights of displaced persons, mitigate the negative effects of displacement on the enjoyment of those rights and investigate and punish the instigators and perpetrators of crimes, such as recruitment and sexual violence. In that regard, we once again reiterate the importance of the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, held in London in June, and we underscore the need for implementing its outcome. We believe that it is vital that, in reviewing the mandates of peacekeeping operations, we bolster the gender perspective when it comes to protection, as well as the priorities of the women and peace and security agenda, as reflected in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2014/693).

We also believe that post-conflict situations require that we continue to step up vigilance and adopt the necessary measures so that women's participation in repairing the country's economic and social fabric can be guaranteed. The rebuilding stage is the source of many of the problems that affect

women in the areas of accessing the labour market, education, health care and decision-making mechanisms. As the Secretary-General report's notes, 2015 is a unique opportunity for all United Nations agencies to focus their attention on empowering women. That should be central to the post-2015 development agenda and be a key factor in promoting both bilateral and multilateral aid for development.

With regard to the opportunity presented by the 2015 review of resolution 1325 (2000), we should reflect on the progress achieved in implementing the resolution and on the challenges that are still before us in the area of women and peace and security. As to the progress and achievements, women's peace groups have gained in strength, and in some contexts have succeed in having their concerns included on the agendas of peace talks. In addition, transitional justice mechanisms are becoming increasingly effective in responding to war crimes against women, increasingly including specific provisions to protect women who testify. We also note that planning strategies in post-conflict situations are increasingly recognizing the need for putting women in decision-making positions. We also think it is an achievement that increasingly countries now have national action plans to implement resolution 1325 (2000), based on their specific circumstances. We see that with Spain, for example. In addition, more and more civilian and military personnel destined for peacekeeping operations are being provided the necessary information to correctly incorporate the gender perspective in the context of their respective missions.

Despite that progress, however, there are still many challenges. Since 1992 fewer than 10 per cent of those involved in peace negotiations have been women, and the responses to gender issues in peace agreements still fall short. Women's participation is also lacking in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Sexual violence in conflicts continues to be carried out systematically and with impunity.

There is no doubt we have made progress on the women and peace and security agenda, but a major challenge lies before us. We must ensure that women are definitively recognized as agents of peace, and protecting their rights needs to be an integral part of peace processes.