

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict-Affected Situations, October 18th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon

I thank the government of Azerbaijan for organizing this debate on the theme of women, the rule of law and transitional justice.

I commend the Security Council for adopting today's resolution underscoring the central importance of women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding.

I welcome your call for concrete actions to not only increase the number of women in peace-making, but crucially to improve the way gender issues are addressed by peace and security institutions, including the Council itself.

These priorities are also featured in my Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding.

The rule of law, women's access to transitional justice, and women's participation are deeply connected.

Women must be involved at every stage of efforts to reassert the rule of law and rebuild societies through transitional justice. Their needs for security and justice must be addressed. Their voices must be heard. Their rights must be protected.

I urge the Council to deal with the full range of women's rights violations during conflict.

The mandates of political and peacekeeping missions should support national prosecutions for serious international crimes against women, and special measures should be taken to provide women with opportunities to engage in the design and delivery of transitional justice.

Gender responsive transitional justice measures can also help to redress historic gender-based injustices and combat the security threats and other obstacles that often restrict women's full engagement in public life.

The United Nations is developing good practices to embed gender dimensions in transitional justice and peacebuilding.

We are working to ensure that women are represented on all UN mediation support teams. All UN-led or co-led peace processes are reaching out to women's civil society organizations.

Our UN Global Focal Point on Police, Justice and Corrections is integrating gender perspectives in all aspects of our rule of law activities. We have significantly increased the percentage of female police peacekeepers and are helping local security sectors tackle sexual and gender based violence. We have also completed a study on ways to enhance women's access to justice in conflict-affected settings.

Human rights mechanisms are also critical. I am pleased that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is advancing a new general recommendation on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post conflict situations.

Notwithstanding these advances, the fact remains that while we have seen a slow but steady increase in women leaders in business and politics, this progress has not been matched around the peace table.

Gains in the representation of women are often achieved through the use of temporary special measures, including quotas. Similar special measures could help increase the number of women at all levels of mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

I am pleased that my report today will be presented by Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women. This is her first such appearance before the Security Council.

My report this year notes progress, but also calls for a more determined global effort to improve the protection of women and girls and enhance women's participation and leadership.

I have sought to lead by example by appointing more women to senior positions throughout the UN.

For the first time in history, five UN peacekeeping operations are led by women – in South Sudan, Liberia, Cyprus, Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire.

Last year, Ms. Aïchatou Souleymane – who now heads our efforts in Côte d'Ivoire -- served as acting Joint Chief Mediator in Darfur. And this year, I appointed the UN's first woman lead mediator in a peace process: Mary Robinson, my special envoy for the Great Lakes region of Africa.

We have more distance to travel, but we have never been this far before.

Women's participation in peace efforts is a matter of gender equality and universal human rights – and crucial to achieving sustainable peace, economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy. Today's resolution makes that point loud and clear.

Societies emerging from conflict face a wealth of challenges unique to their circumstances. But all encounter a crucial moment at which they can begin again, draw lessons from the upheaval and gain a new path of stability and progress.

Transitional justice – with its various mechanisms to promote reconciliation, redress and compensation – has proven to play a critical role. But the success of such processes depends fundamentally on their inclusiveness – the involvement of women, of minorities, of aggrieved parties, of all stakeholders.

The year 2015 will mark the 15th anniversary of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The Council has called for a High-level Review meeting to mark that occasion.

I am confident that with your continued support, we can achieve concrete results and measurable change in the lives of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Thank you.