

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

Statement by Mr. Beck, Permanent Mission of Solomon Islands to the United Nations

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on women, the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict-affected situations. I would also like to welcome the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2013/525).

At the outset, the Solomon Islands aligns its statement with that delivered by the representative of the Marshall Islands on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum. I would also like to make some additional comments in my national capacity.

Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010) provide a framework for improving the situation of women in conflict, as articulated in the President's concept note (S/2013/587, annex). The impact of conflict on society as a whole exposes the vulnerability and dignity of women and children even more.

The Solomon Islands went through a conflict situation beginning late in 1998. I would like to use this occasion to speak on some lessons learned from it. We saw both the vulnerability of women and their strength. During the conflict, women organized themselves into various groups, identifying themselves as women for peace, acting as mediators, providing bridges and bringing communities together. Cultural peace and reconciliation traditions continued to be used to unify and heal communities even after the conflict. The role of women is recognized by the Solomon Islands, which appointed women to be two of its five truth and reconciliation commissioners. They have since presented their reports to the Government.

At one of the open debates in the Council during the previous session, we discussed cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations (see S/PV.7015). Looking at the experience of the Solomon Islands relating to women and peace and security, we cannot help making the connection to the contribution of regional organizations to the maintenance of international peace and security, given its role in our national situation. At the request of the Government of the Solomon Islands, under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2003, a Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, led by Australia and supported by New Zealand and all the Pacific small island developing States, was deployed to my country to restore the rule of law, rebuild core public institutions and allow the country to recover from the conflict. The Regional Assistance Mission, made up of military, police and civilian components, restored the rule of law and carried out peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking activities.

To date, our economy is growing, State institutions are functioning and the country is open for business. Accordingly, the Regional Assistance Mission, in partnership with the Government, has now undergone a transitional phase. It is now a police-only mission; its success belongs to the people of the Solomon Islands as well as the Pacific. The Regional Mission was flexible in adapting to a changing environment, allowing the partnership to conduct the transition at a pace suited to the conditions in the receiving State, the Solomon Islands. It is an example of South-South cooperation, and triangular cooperation with the Solomon Islands' regional neighbours. While each example of transitional justice is unique and has its own national context, my delegation feels that the Pacific has found a model that addresses peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking, all rolled into a single mission. As a nation, we still have much to do in serving our people, scattered over our country of 900 islands.

The Solomon Islands is one of the few countries that have a ministry of peace and reconciliation. We also have a ministry of women's, youth's and children's affairs. We have come a long way in implementing elements of the five resolutions on women and peace and security. In 2009 we reviewed our national policy on gender equity and women's development. In partnership with Australia, we have also undertaken a Solomon Islands family health and safety study, which has found that two out of three women in our country suffer from gender-based violence. A recent commission on the status of women found that 7 out of 10 women around the world suffer from gender-based violence. In response to that, we adopted a national policy on eliminating violence against women. Our national police have responded, adopting a no-drop policy of victim protection that deals with both victims and perpetrators. Our public solicitor's office has established a family protection

unit that provides specialized services to women and children. Also, working with other non-State actors and faith-based institutions, we continue to provide shelter, counselling and support for victims of gender-based violence.

We have come a long way, but we are determined to keep going, focusing on the economic empowerment of women and greater investment in rural areas, which is where the bulk of populations are located in least developed countries (LDCs) as well as in Pacific nations. These are conflict-resolution measures as well as conflict-prevention measures. It is for that reason that putting peace at the heart of sustainable development, with peace — and state—building goals, is something that we, as a member of the Group of 77 and China, would like to see on the post-2015 development agenda. We would like to see more investment in high- value, game-changing investments that can transform economies within the Pacific and in LDCs to allow us to build resilience against warm, cold and hot security threats.

For us, as a small island developing State, climate change remains a threat multiplier, with impacts on food and water security. Threats of sea-level rise continue to disempower women as land is swallowed up by sea. Relocating populations to higher islands also poses threats of conflict, as one language group moves from its ancestral land to another land-tenure system. It was for that reason that the General Assembly adopted resolution 63/281, on climate change and its possible security implications. We see this as an issue that all United Nations principal organs, including the Security Council, should be seized of.

I would like to conclude by assuring you once again, Mr. President, of the support and cooperation of the Solomon Islands in protecting women's safety and their contribution to nation-building and world peace.