

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. M'Beou, Permanent Mission of Togo to the United Nations.

First of all, I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate on the issue of women and peace and security in the context of the role of women's civil society organizations in the prevention and settlement of armed conflicts and peacebuilding. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Ms. Bineta Diop and Mr. Hervé Ladsous for their statements. I assure Ms. Diop of my country's support for her work at the head of her organization for the effective protection of women's rights, in particular in Africa.

Twelve years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), Togo welcomes the ongoing reflections begun by the United Nations on the implementation of the resolution. The importance of this process resides in the fact that it is an opportunity to take stock of the results achieved and difficulties encountered, and to contemplate strategies to be adopted in our future work. While tremendous efforts have been made in the implementation of the resolution, much remains to be done, in particular in areas such as the implementation of peace agreements, seamless transitions, the gradual drawdown of United Nations missions, and the pursuit of a secure environment for civil society organizations. All these elements must be taken into consideration in order to strengthen the process of preventing and resolving conflicts and peacebuilding.

The report of the Secretary-General before us (S/2012/732) indicates that women and girls continue to suffer violations of their rights, in particular through sexual and gender-based violence, forced displacement and obstructions to humanitarian access, which are serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian and refugee law. While the United Nations does its best to protect civilians, in particular women and children, and calls on all parties to the conflict to act accordingly, we must still note that violence against women and children is growing, as seen in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Mali.

In addition to these horrible, tragic and reprehensible acts, we also note the use of heavy weapons in populated areas, which leads to mass population movements, in particular among women and children, thereby exposing them to all types of violence and violations of their rights. These actions must cease and their perpetrators punished under the relevant international legal instruments.

It is therefore important that national legislation incorporate international criminal law, which provides for such acts and punishes their perpetrators. The Council must ensure that impunity is not the rule, but the exception. My country welcomes the fact that measures adopted by the United Nations to protect women and girls include guidelines that have been drawn up by the heads of military and police units in peacekeeping operations. The sanctions laid out therein against peacekeepers involved in cases of sexual violence meet the expectations of the international community and are designed to fully and completely protect vulnerable women and girls.

The international community has deployed immense efforts to promote such protection, but it will be successful only if women are involved in the crucial processes of conflict settlement. Unfortunately, women's organizations and civil society are very often excluded from such processes. Yet the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) requires enhanced

cooperation among Member States, international and regional security institutions, and civil society.

The gaps in the implementation of peace agreements — which are undoubtedly complex — have led the United Nations and international human rights organizations to require the effective participation of civil society, in particular women's organizations. These organizations have, of course, an important role to play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Their involvement in the settlement of conflicts is an opportunity to influence peacekeeping and peacebuilding policies. It is therefore appropriate for women to participate actively in the different stages of negotiations, as the peace process gains legitimacy and credibility when women participate in it.

In 2011, women were represented in 12 — or 86 per cent — of the 14 United Nations mediation support teams. However, only four of fourteen delegations to peace negotiations had a woman among their ranks. This deplorable state of affairs underscores the urgent need to impress upon the parties to conflicts that they should give a significant role to women in peace negotiations and in the implementation of peace agreements, as it is women's civil society organizations that ensure the sustainability of peacebuilding on the ground.

Women cannot play this positive role unless they are given responsibilities within the support structures for rebuilding the country. We are therefore welcome the participation of women in the facilitation and mediation processes for conflicts in countries such as the Central African Republic, Cyprus and Malawi. In this respect, we support the report of the Secretary-General, which encourages Member States and regional organizations that participate in peace processes to appoint more women as mediators, co-mediators and mediation advisors.

I note in that respect that my country since 2006 has included a gender mainstreaming strategy in our development policies and programmes. This strategy, in its preamble and in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000), affirms the important role that women play in the prevention and settlement of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and emphasizes the importance of their participation on an equal footing in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security.

In translating this strategy into reality, Togo promoted the participation of women's civil society organizations in the signing of the comprehensive political agreement of 2006, which allowed the country to emerge from the socio-political crisis that began in 1990. They also played an active role in the work of the truth, justice and reconciliation commission, the results of which were accepted by almost all of the population. The importance that the Government attaches to the role of women in building the country is also evident in the election of many women to Parliament and the appointment of a number of others to Government and other positions of responsibility. The aim of the Government is to ensure that women's participation in our country's political and administrative life is increased to achieve in the long term percentages that reflect their real commitment and interest in public affairs.

To conclude, I wish to assure the Council of the support of my Government in the full and complete implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We welcome the fact that on 31 October the Council adopted a presidential statement on this subject (S/PRST/2012/23), under the Guatemalan presidency.