

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, (Conflict Related Sexual Violence)  
23 February 2012, Security Council Chamber

*Statement by H.E Jerandi, Permanent Representative of Tunisia*

I would first like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for your initiative in organizing this important open debate on women and peace and security. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for their excellent statements.

My delegation appreciates the opportunity to participate in this debate. We reiterate Tunisia's longstanding commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, especially in relation to conflict situations, as well as our determination to properly implement the goals of resolution 1325 (2000), of which my country was one of the authors. Tunisia continues to be profoundly convinced that peace, development and democracy will not be achieved without women's participation as powerful actors of change.

We particularly wish to highlight the importance of replacing the image of women in conflict situations as humiliated, marginalized victims — with an image of active partners in the process of conflict prevention, mediation and resolution.

It must be recognized that there has been growing awareness of the many forms of violence against women in conflict situations and of the threats that such violence poses to their security, their health and their ability to actively participate in peace processes. It is important to give women, who are the first victims of violence in all its manifestations, a primary role in peacekeeping and peace building, and it is even more important and urgent to do so in the process of conflict prevention.

It is also clear that Security Council debates have led to significant normative innovations, in particular the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the deployment of women's protection advisers within peacekeeping missions, and the operationalization of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. They must receive the financial assistance necessary to enable them to help countries develop comprehensive national strategies to combat violence against women.

Tunisia, for its part, has begun to implement a plan of action for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which, *inter alia*, encourages the training of women in the area of peacekeeping and peace building, in order to be able to deploy qualified personnel to United Nations missions in the field. It is intended in particular to improve pre-deployment training, with particular stress on special measures to protect women against all forms of violence.

It is clear, however, that despite the progress achieved, violence against women in armed conflict persists, as is reflected in the most recent report (S/2012/33) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence. This is a reminder that a great deal remains to be done in order to achieve all of the objectives set out in resolution 1325 (2000), and that it is very important that the Security Council remain seized of this issue and take additional, vigorous measures aimed at strengthening the protection of women in armed conflicts.

National ownership of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council remains the best way to ensure their effective implementation. In that context, it is up to States, first and foremost, to take the coercive and awareness-raising measures necessary to resolve the problem. Civil society organizations should also contribute significantly to strengthening the protection of women in that

context, with a view to making it possible to amplify the voices of women victims of violence, break the silence on their suffering, and support the awareness-raising initiatives taken on their behalf.

Convinced of the urgent need to put an end to impunity for such heinous acts, Tunisia, which acceded to the Rome Statute recently, a few months after the revolution, believes that it is crucial to further promote international cooperation and assistance so as to strengthen, inter alia, the capacities of Governments to develop national early-warning systems aimed at preventing an escalation of violence against women. It is also imperative that they investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of such acts, in accordance with the responsibilities incumbent upon them by virtue of their accession to international human rights and humanitarian law instruments.

Dealing with this issue is a reminder to us of the tragic situations facing women in many conflicts and crises around the world. Women are the first to be caught up in the turmoil of flight and internal displacement and confined, usually with their children, to refugee camps, where their situation is most precarious.

In Africa — a continent that, unfortunately, is afflicted by many crises and conflicts — many thousands of women are affected by the ravages of war and crises of all kinds. The debate on this issue also brings to mind the situation of Palestinian women, who are systematically oppressed as a result of the Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan. A Palestinian woman aged 60 today would have since birth known only the abuses of the occupation, spending her entire life crossing checkpoints, fleeing bombings and burying and mourning the dead. Such women and many others must serve as an impetus for the Council to take urgent action so that they can live in dignity and simply realize their rights as human beings.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate that my country remains at the disposal of the United Nations in the context of any action relating to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and of other international instruments aimed at strengthening the full participation of women in the decision-making process and at ensuring a deep-rooted culture of human rights, as a fundamental guarantee of the elimination of all forms of violence against women.