

*Statement by Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff, Deputy U.S. Permanent Representative, on Women and peace and security, in the Security Council Chamber, October 23, 2007*

Thank you Mr. President,

The United States would like to thank you and the Permanent Mission of Ghana for choosing to focus on the important topic of women and peace and security for this month's open debate.

We welcome the Secretary-General's latest report and agree that important groundwork has been laid for a longer-term effort by the United Nations toward the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325. However, much more needs to be done.

Mr. President,

The important contributions women can and do make in decision-making to prevent conflict, mediate peace processes, and assist in post-conflict reconstruction and rebuilding must be recognized and endorsed at a national level. Failure to bring women into these processes in a meaningful way leaves a critical resource untapped and excludes a large segment, in many cases a majority, of the population. This undermines both the credibility and sustainability of these processes. The United States calls on all member states to promote gender equality and a greater role for women in the prevention of conflict, peace processes, and post-conflict reconstruction.

As part of this effort to fully incorporate women into international efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, the United States strongly supports the appointment of women to senior positions throughout the United Nations system and, in particular, as Special Envoy or Representative of the Secretary-General. In this regard, the United States especially welcomes the recent nomination of Ambassador Loj as the Secretary-General's new Special Representative in Liberia. The United States calls on the Secretary-General, as a matter of urgency, to increase the number of women considered for United Nations Special Representative and Envoy positions and encourages member states to redouble their efforts to nominate women candidates for these positions.

Mr. President,

One of the key challenges we face today is reducing the tragedy of violence against women and girls in areas afflicted by armed conflict. It is often women and children who face the most horrific consequences of conflict in the world today.

Sexual violence against women is reprehensible in any context, but it is especially heinous when it is used by political or military leaders as a tool to achieve political or military objectives. It is with this in mind that the United States and others have introduced a resolution in the Third Committee of the General Assembly entitled "Eliminating the Use of Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence to Achieve Political or Military Objectives."

This resolution condemns the use by states and by non-state actors of rape, typically systematic mass rape, to achieve military or political objectives. This would be the first UN resolution to focus specifically on this particularly egregious form of violence against women. It calls for states to end impunity by prosecuting and punishing those who use rape as a military or political tool; to protect and support victims; and for states, for appropriate UN officers and agencies, and for civil society to develop and implement comprehensive strategies on prevention and prosecution of rape. We ask member states to support and to consider co-sponsoring the text, which will be addressed under the Agenda Item on "Advancement of Women."

Mr. President,

Given the special vulnerability of the civilian population during conflicts which threaten the peace and security of their nations, it is particularly abhorrent when those charged with restoring peace and stability become the perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children. The Council has addressed this issue in past statements, reiterating its condemnation of all acts of sexual exploitation and abuse by all categories of personnel in UN peacekeeping missions and urging troop contributing countries to take appropriate preventive action, including the conduct of pre-deployment awareness training, and to take disciplinary and other action to ensure full accountability in cases of misconduct involving their personnel. The United Nations, as we heard from Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno earlier this morning, has made

considerable and laudable efforts to enforce a zero-tolerance policy toward sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel assigned to UN peacekeeping operations, and has made considerable progress in providing appropriate training as well as improved oversight of conduct and discipline. We underscore the need for all allegations to be investigated properly and for appropriate follow-up action to be taken.

Thank you.