

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. Govender, Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations

My delegation expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/525). We thank the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay; and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Brigitte Balipou, respectively, for their statements. My delegation also wishes to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting today.

The report of the Secretary-General reflects the measurable advances that have been made across all areas of the women, peace and security agenda since the adoption of landmark resolution 1325 (2000) 13 years ago, and its implementation. It has provided for the establishment of an enabling framework placing women at the centre of processes impacting on their safety, security and development, in equal partnership with men. The report highlights the remaining significant protection, prevention and participation deficits in the areas of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict economic recovery, impeding the full and effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

However, we must recognize the limitation that comes with that approach and the underlying expectations of the mechanisms to deliver on these areas in a sustainable manner. Such an approach, we must appreciate, brings with it short-term relief and impact and therefore cannot be considered a panacea for the full and effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The host State has to eventually play its rightful role in addressing the specific challenges in the longterm.

My delegation welcomes the recommendations elaborated in the report of the Secretary-General on how to close these implementation gaps. A renewed commitment is also required of Member States and the United Nations system to effectively implement the seven-point action plan.

We welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2122 (2013), especially as it seeks to place women at the table for negotiations and peace talks. Women generally represent a majority constituency in societies, and as such should not be excluded from the negotiation table in conflict-affected States. South Africa is supportive of such an approach, especially as our own history has taught us about the powerful role that women play in bringing about peace and stability. We also believe that women should play a role beyond that, one that includes securing a larger stake in political leadership and policy- and decision-making positions, both in the public and private sectors.

The report of the Secretary-General correctly points out the need for increased participation by women in United Nations peacekeeping missions. South Africa has played its role in that regard by contributing through its police deployment, a contingent made up of 16 per cent women, which, according to the Secretary-General's report, is the highest percentage of female deployment by a troop-contributing country.

While the host State needs to demonstrate the political will to fully implement resolution 1325 (2000), greater commitment and support by the United Nations and the international community is needed to capacitate countries in conflict and post-conflict situations. In the South African context, where women have been historically disadvantaged by apartheid and the patriarchal nature of South African society, men traditionally dominated the political and economic space. During the past 18 years of democratic rule, the Government instituted specific measures that included electoral and candidature quotas for women at the national, provincial and local levels of Government, including at the executive and legislature branches of Government.

Our history has not only demonstrated, but has taught us, about the powerful role that women play in a post-conflict setting. South African women represent a powerful constituency and have been at the forefront of driving reform and developing and advancing responsive policies and legislation across all sectors of Government and the public and private sectors. At the level of women's participation in political decision-making, today South Africa has 44 per cent women representation in Parliament and 43 per cent women at the level of Cabinet ministers. At the provincial level, five of the nine provincial premiers are women.

We recognize the importance of women having unfettered access to justice in conflict and post- conflict settings, including through gender-responsive legal, judicial and security-sector reform and other mechanisms. Access to justice for women in conflict and post-conflict settings through conscious policies of inclusion is essential to building fair, equitable and just societies. Women suffer disproportionately from poverty, and the risks they face are heightened in armed conflict and post-conflict settings.

Women's legal status and rights must be ensured in post-conflict situations. Strengthening the legal framework to address issues of discrimination against women with respect to land ownership, access to economic opportunity and employment, education and health care is an essential component of gender- responsive peacebuilding architecture.

Justice for victims of serious violations of international law is an essential requirement for sustainable peace, security and the development for States emerging from armed conflict, where the rule of law must enjoy primacy and be unscrupulously upheld. My delegation therefore supports efforts by the Council to continue fighting impunity for the most serious crimes committed against women and girls, through the work of the International Criminal Court, ad hoc and mixed tribunals, as well as specialized chambers in national tribunals.

My delegation appreciates the commendable work undertaken by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. However, we remain of the view that significantly more needs to be done by Member States, the United Nations system and the relevant entities in supporting national efforts by States to increase women's participation, leadership and expertise in the rule of law and transitional justice, as well as in advancing accountability measures for serious offences committed against women and children.

In conclusion, my delegation welcomes resolution 2122 (2013) and its reinforcement of preceding resolutions. We also welcome the announcement by the Secretary-General of a high-level review in 2015 to assess progress at the global, regional and national levels on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).