

The President:

I thank Ms. Ayang for her briefing. I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the Minister for Family and the Promotion of Women of Angola.

It is a great honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola and to offer some insights on the important issue of women and peace and security, with particular emphasis on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the briefers for their significant contributions to the subject matter under consideration. I welcome the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun; the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Macharia Kamau; Ambassador Tété Antonio, Permanent Observer of the African Union; and Ms. Paleki Ayang of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network.

The African continent is still engulfed in conflict situations, some of them dragging on for more than a generation. Civil strife and fratricidal conflicts have greatly affected the social, economic and human development of the continent. Besides the colonial legacy, policies of social and political exclusion, coupled with widespread economic inequalities and violations of human rights, are relevant root causes of those conflicts. Such situations have exacted a heavy burden, primarily on the civilian populations of the countries affected, as well as on the international community, which has been required to intervene in order to contain the spillover effects of the conflicts.

It is universally understood that prevention is the most effective way to avoid the human, social and financial costs caused by conflicts. It is also understood that the best means to prevent conflict is to build societies based on principles of inclusivity, with equal rights accorded to all citizens without exclusion or discrimination and with the prevalence of the rule of law. It is also understood that the resolution of conflicts should take place through the channels of dialogue, mediation and the compatibility of diverging interests, which is possible only when dialogue and mediation lead to meaningful compromise and everybody's interests are safeguarded.

The Security Council is currently dealing with a large number of such conflicts — deploying military means through peacekeeping operations, after the signing of peace deals and managing post-conflict situations. The Council has also established a number of political special missions of a preventive nature, and the Secretary-General or his envoys have exercised good offices and mediation efforts to seek to avert the outbreak of conflicts.

In the search for more effective means to deal with conflict situations, in 2015 the Secretary-General launched three major peace and security reviews. They include the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, the Advisory Group of Experts for the Review of Peacebuilding Architecture and the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

The reviews agreed on the postulate that the greatest responsibility of the international community is the prevention of armed conflict and highlighted the critical need for greater investment in prevention strategies. The reviews furthermore stressed the value added of the women and peace

and security agenda to conflict prevention and the potential for early warning in gender-sensitive analysis by identifying the drivers of conflict, such as changing dynamics, namely, at family and community-level relations. It also highlighted that conflict prevention could be greatly improved by engaging with women, given their grass-roots knowledge, especially in providing relevant indicators for dealing with the threats of conflict and for the implementation of preventive measures.

The global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) recognizes the importance of enhancing the role of women and of their participation at all phases and levels of peace processes, given its potential for accelerating the attainment of solutions to conflict and the sustainability of peace. Women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts can take on different forms and dimensions, inter alia, direct involvement in formal peace negotiations, consultative commissions, public policies, decision-making, national dialogues, peacebuilding and comprehensive reforms, leading to democratization processes.

In addition, besides ensuring the inclusion of gender-sensitive language in peace agreements, women can bring more than gender issues to the negotiating table by instilling the holistic approach that a peace process entails. The global study refers to paradigmatic cases in Liberia, Kenya and Burundi, where women's groups have achieved significant results through the exercise of a strong influence in the negotiating processes, by exerting pressure for the start and conclusion of negotiations and, in some cases, mobilizing for the signing of a peace agreement or, alternatively, promoting measures to prevent a new cycle of violence, addressing the root causes of conflict, thereby contributing to changing power relations in society

Women and children are the main victims in today's armed conflicts. Therefore, their participation in those processes becomes a crucial issue. Their voices must be heard in the prevention of conflict, in the negotiation of peace settlements and in ensuring that their interests are taken into account in post-conflict reconstruction. It is of pivotal importance that the institutional mechanisms established in Africa promote an environment conducive to the meaningful participation of women in peace and security, while reasserting the full commitments of the African States to that objective.

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the African Union's five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme and the emphasis on women's leadership on issues related to peace and security are achievements translating a renewed awareness of the essential role played by women.

Women in Angola have participated decisively in all efforts towards the attainment of peace. The immediate post-conflict period included women's direct involvement in peacebuilding and national reconstruction. Women were instrumental in providing psychological support to the victims of the armed conflict as counsellors of peace, national reconciliation and social healing. The Government established counselling centres to raise awareness on their economic, social, political and civil rights and as a tool for families' participation in the country's development.

Through partnerships with civil society organizations, efforts have been deployed in order to strengthen women's participation in the country's political and economic life. The non-governmental organization Roots of Peace was created with the aim of bringing together women from all political parties represented in Parliament to participate in the efforts to consolidate peace and democracy. Angola joined the campaign He for She, which is aimed at raising the awareness of men and boys for the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence.

Angola has been playing a role in the preservation of peace and security in Africa, especially in the Great Lakes region, in promoting a culture of peace based on experience gained in conflict-prevention processes, in the promotion of dialogue and national reconciliation. Today, we have many women at all levels of the army and the police. In my delegation, we have a woman brigadier. Women also participate in electoral observer missions.

Finally, it is our expectation that the new awareness on the key role women play in social, political and economic life will lead to a world where women can effectively carry out their responsibilities and fully exercise of their rights. We are sure that if strong political will and commitment are fully brought into action towards the attainment of such goals, women will make a tangible contribution to building a more just and peaceful world.

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