



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza
Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
Security Council Open Debate on the
High-level Review of the Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on
Women, Peace, and Security
13 October 2015

Mr. President,

My delegation wishes to congratulate Spain for its Presidency of the Security Council this month and for convening this particularly important Open Debate and High-Level Review of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

SC Resolution 1325 is historic as it links, for the first time, women, armed conflict, and peace and security. It also recognizes that women and children are impacted by armed conflict in differentiated and more adverse ways, and that women play an imperative role in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

In light of the number, intensity and changing nature of present conflicts, this High-Level Review and Global Study are highly relevant. In less than a decade, the number of major violent conflicts has almost tripled. The interconnections between natural disasters, humanitarian crises and conflicts are more and more visible. Violent extremism and terrorism in many parts of the world, in particular in the Middle East and parts of Africa, has brought violence to new levels of savagery against civilians and cultural and religious patrimony.

Women and girls are caught up in these conflict situations and are subjected to rape, sexual assault, torture, human trafficking, forced marriages, forced religious conversions; they are bought and sold, or even given as gifts or trophies to terrorist fighters.

My delegation is particularly appalled by acts of sexual violence as a war strategy designed to dehumanize and demoralize women, girls and their families. These attacks have long-term, even lifelong, traumatic effects on women and girls, both physically and psychologically, and, in many cases, the victims of sexual violence are excluded from or heavily stigmatized in their own families and communities. In addition, these crimes have also a detrimental effect on younger generations, as women are most often the primary educators, caregivers and breadwinners.

Such realities are harrowing. As Pope Francis said in his address to the General Assembly, they “should serve as a grave summons to an examination of conscience on the part of those charged with the conduct of international affairs.”¹

For its part, the Catholic Church is present and runs a network of institutions in most of the areas of conflict. Catholic organizations and agencies rapidly and effectively respond to the needs arising from violence on women and girls by providing them with essential health care and support. They promote programs aimed at preventing such violence and

¹ Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, New York, 25 September 2015.

ensuring women's dignity and effective role in society, by promoting pacification and reconciliation, while addressing the deeper causes of violence against women and girls. They run special programs designed to fight stigmatization of the victims of sexual violence and reintegrate them into their families and local communities. Both as a way of preventing conflict and ensuring peace, they encourage parents to send girls to school, training women to take community leadership and decision-making roles.

Concerning the efforts to implement Resolution 1325, my delegation strongly objects to the suggestion that recovery and rehabilitation measures, include abortion, an approach that, once again, neglects to address some of the real causes of violence while making the most defenseless pay the highest price.

There is no doubt that much still has to be done to meet the enormous needs in a satisfactory manner. Thus we must do more and act more rapidly, because crimes against women and girls – our mothers, sisters, and daughters – cannot anymore go unheard, unseen, overlooked or treated as an inevitable consequence in the horrible reality of armed conflict.

Mr. President,

My delegation encourages the United Nations and its Member States to recruit more women for preventive diplomacy, mediation efforts, peacekeeping missions and peacebuilding processes. Women bring specific and at times decisive contributions necessary in such critical areas, helping to foster good relations with the local communities and to build trust among parties in conflict, elements that are essential to the success of any diplomatic effort and conflict resolution.

The role of women in peace and security should not be considered as an afterthought or simply as something politically correct; it is an essential contribution to all our efforts to spare our world from further scourges of war and violence.

Thank you, Mr. President.