

**Statement by Bineta Diop  
At the UN Security Council Open Debate  
on Women, Peace and Security  
30 November 2012**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Mr. President, Excellencies, representatives of civil society, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to address the Security Council this morning. I am speaking on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.<sup>1</sup> I am here today in my capacity as Founder and President of Femmes Africa Solidarité, an international non-governmental organization with over 15 years of experience advocating for women's human rights in Africa.

The theme of this year's women, peace and security Open Debate, with its focus on women's civil society organizations, is timely. Twelve years after the adoption of resolution 1325, the vital work of civil society, particularly women's groups in ensuring international peace and security, must be recognized and supported, specifically with political access, resources, and respect.

I recently returned from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) where I conducted a Solidarity Mission to assess the situation of our sisters in eastern DRC. I saw for myself the degrading situation of women in Kanyarucinya refugee camp and the immense suffering of the women in Heal Africa Hospital in Goma and Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, where women's bodies are being repaired after assaults of sexual violence. I was caught in the fighting during the seizure of Goma by M23 rebels, and I saw people who were already displaced become displaced yet again with nowhere to go. I promised the women that I would echo their voices calling urgently for peace, security and humanitarian assistance in DRC.

Today, I will highlight three key issues: One, the **contribution of women's organizations to international peace and security**; two, the **importance of conflict prevention**; and three, the **security threats women and women's human rights defenders face in conflict settings**.

**First, the contribution of women's organizations to peace**

Despite the constraints and barriers we face, women play a central role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and in the building of peace at community, national, and international levels, from early-warning to post-conflict reconstruction. For example, in the Women's Situation Room established during the 2012 elections in Senegal, it was the combination of women mobilizing communities for peace, mediating between opposing groups, and monitoring and reporting incidents of irregularity, that contributed to peaceful elections.

Regarding conflict resolution, despite much rhetoric and many commitments, the inclusion of women and gender expertise in the implementation of peace accords is unacceptably low. This continuing exclusion is demonstrated in recent data in this year's report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security. We can also see the lack of women at the table in current peace processes, such as those underway in Colombia and Myanmar, and in negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan.

Women are not absent because they lack negotiation skills or because they will not make vital contributions to peace processes. In Colombia, women's organizations have united to create 'Women for Peace,' a new movement with concrete recommendations and proposals for the nascent peace process. Malian women, together with women from across West Africa, have been active for months regarding the crisis in Mali, asserting their right to engage in efforts to bring about a political solution to the crisis, and reminding all actors that women have been specifically targeted in violence. Women in Syria have been raising their voices but are vastly under-represented, if not completely excluded, from the efforts to seek a diplomatic solution in the ongoing conflict.

---

<sup>1</sup> The NGOWG coalition members are: Amnesty International; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarité; Global Action to Prevent War; Global Justice Center; Human Rights Watch; The Institute for Inclusive Security; International Action Network on Small Arms; International Alert; International Rescue Committee; Refugees International; International Women's Program of the Open Society Foundations; Social Science Research Council; Women's Refugee Commission; Women's Action for New Directions; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Women's priorities are not secondary nor special interest concerns in these processes. They are integral to making peace more robust and sustainable, and it is the responsibility of all relevant actors to ensure that women representatives, women's human rights, and gender expertise are embedded in all efforts to prevent and resolve conflict: be they informal or formal conflict resolution processes, or rebuilding after conflict. This includes in disarmament programs, security sector reforms, judicial reforms, and political and constitutional reforms.

### **Second, prevention and the root causes of conflict**

The most effective way to meet women, peace and security commitments and obligations is to prevent conflict from occurring.

We must challenge the underlying causes of human rights violations against women and girls in armed conflict, including gender discrimination and gender-based violence, militarization, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. This means ensuring women's active participation in designing and implementing disarmament and prevention strategies, and Member States adopting a comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty with a legal, enforceable prevention criteria on gender-based violence.

### **Third, security threats to women and women's human rights defenders**

As we observe the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, violence against women and girls remains widespread, and far too often is committed with impunity. During conflict and long after conflict ends, violence against women and girls is unacceptably high, remaining an enormous barrier to women's full participation in social, economic and political life.

Due to their work exposing violence against women and other human rights violations, women human rights defenders are exposed to threats, intimidation, violence, and at times alienation from their own communities. Those in Afghanistan, the DRC, and throughout the Middle East, often face serious personal risk, and sometimes death.

Last month, Dr. Denis Mukwege, an outspoken supporter of victims of sexual violence in the DRC, who has continuously called for peace in his country and who is well-known to many in this room for his advocacy for women's rights, was attacked in his home. There are thousands of advocates like Dr. Mukwege who, despite these risks, work to implement this Council's resolutions on women, peace and security.

The Security Council and all Member States should concretely support accountability for violations of women's human rights, particularly violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. In addition, protection and prevention measures must ensure the safety of women, including those who are displaced, refugees, or disabled.

**I would like to conclude my statement with a call for action** to the international community, including UN Member States, and particularly Security Council Members, to:

**Engage women's groups as key partners** in peace, mediation, negotiation, and governmental processes.

**Demonstrate leadership and prioritize women's rights** by implementing national and regional action plans for resolution 1325; regularly meeting with women's groups and women leaders, and by ensuring you are substantively incorporating women's priorities into all relevant negotiations. We call on you to make these priorities non-negotiable.

**Allocate political and financial resources** to women's civil society organizations, which is necessary to the engagement and authority of these groups as partners among national, regional and international communities.

**Finally, we call on Members of the Security Council to be role models by consistently and fully implementing Security Council resolution 1325.**

Women whose communities and lives are affected by conflict demand that the Security Council, with its mandate on international peace and security, and all Member States and UN actors, support them and champion women's human rights. From the women in Sri Lanka seeking to rebuild their lives to the women in Afghanistan demanding a voice in shaping their country's future; from the women seeking protection and medical care in the Kivus to the women driven from their homes by violence in Colombia; from the women in Sierra Leone, Bosnia Herzegovina and Sudan still seeking justice, to the human rights defenders in Iraq and the women disarmament activists in Cote d'Ivoire. These women are rightfully expecting you to turn your words into action. Women suffering count on us. Together, we have innovative ideas, solutions, and means; what are we waiting for?