



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

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to the United Nations

at the Security Council debate

on

WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY

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Mr. President,

Thank you for convening today's important debate on "Women, peace and security." My delegation commends your leadership of this council for the month of October. I would also like to express my appreciation for the Secretary General's comprehensive report on the progress of Resolution 1325.

Mr. President,

The government of Afghanistan is dedicated to the implementation of Resolution 1325. However, in post-conflict countries such as Afghanistan, forces of insecurity are the greatest threat to the advancement of the three pillars of this resolution: protection of women in war and peace, promotion of women's rights, and participation of women in peace processes.

As the Secretary General's report has indicated, insecurity is the basic concern that must be addressed before true progress towards women's rights can be made. Instability affects the most vulnerable parts of the population, and women and children continue to account for the majority of casualties in hostilities. In Afghanistan, the atrocities of the Taliban threaten the progress of women. The historical agenda of the Taliban, during its rule in Afghanistan, included a tyrannical denial of all basic rights to women: the right to free movement, to education, to work. Today, this goal of the Taliban appears unchanged: where they advance in Afghanistan, women's rights retreat. In areas of increased Taliban activity, there are pronounced restrictions on women's mobility, attacks on girls' schools, and a decrease in services for women provided by our government and aid agencies.

Mr. President,

Despite the growing threat of insecurity, Afghanistan, with the support of the international community, has made several improvements in the participation of women in peace and security.

The Government of Afghanistan has ensured that women's rights are enshrined in the Afghanistan Constitution, as well as all major international agreements such as the Afghanistan Compact and the recent Paris Declaration. In addition, women have participated in the transitional process from the Bonn Conference until the elections of 2004-2005 and onward. Women have been appointed to high positions in national and local governments, including cabinet-level posts. Today, women account for 27% of the National Assembly and almost 26% of civil servants. Habiba Sorabi, the successful female governor of Bamiyan, is one notable example.

Afghanistan has also strengthened its government institutions to promote women's rights. The Ministry of Women's Affairs has achieved much through its dedicated advocacy for women. The National Justice Plan of Afghanistan seeks to improve women's involvement in the justice sector, and the National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan aims to increase women's participation in all areas of social, economic and political life. Finally, the Government of Afghanistan, with international organizations and domestic groups, has worked tirelessly to promote women's rights in Afghanistan by improving access to healthcare, education and basic services. Today, 40% of children in school are girls, and 81% of the population now receives healthcare through the Basic Package of Health Services. 40,000 more women now live through childbirth every year.

Mr. President,

Despite these advances, Afghanistan needs to continue to do much more to meet the objectives of Resolution 1325.

Most immediately, the security situation continues to directly affect women's security and their access to health, education and social protection. Continued terrorist activity is affecting the implementation and monitoring of all programs and projects, especially in the provinces. In addition, poverty, the lack of education and unbalanced allocation of resources must also be addressed. More work is needed to ensure the participation of women in all parts of the stabilization process.

To continue to advance women's participation in peace and security, our country has a few observations to offer:

1. **International involvement is crucial.** International support for national initiatives provides important gender-sensitivity training for national institutions such as the national army and police force. International training for women in the civil service, and international support for female students in the form of schools and increased educational opportunities are also crucial. Lastly, coordinating roles, such as the role of UNAMA in Afghanistan, are immensely helpful in coordinating activities and sharing knowledge between organizations that are working to forward women's rights.

However, international partners must recognize that:

- a) **Improvement should be internally-driven.** While international support is important for all of the aforementioned reasons, the international community should be cautioned that true reform for women's participation in peace and security should be generated within the context of the particular country. International involvement should be motivated by the needs of the women within the particular country. There should be no external imposition of standards; there should be no external political agendas.
 - b) **International troops should assist national efforts to protect women.** For better protection of women's participation in peace and security, gender sensitivity training should be mandatory for troops from all countries. In addition, their assistance is important in facilitating women's mobility to access water, healthcare and markets, and in creating the conditions for women's safe participation in the public and political life of the country. For example, in Afghanistan, international forces continue to protect roads on which women and families frequently travel to access government services.
2. **Importance of regional collaboration.** The Secretary-General's advocacy of regional action plans and regional organizations to support national commitment is fully supported by our government. As infringements on women's rights are often cross-boundary issues, such as the spillage of women refugees from conflict situations, solutions should also be cross-boundary.

3. **Importance of a cohesive approach.** A successful approach to advance women's participation in peace and security must address women's role in all major sectors of society. In Afghanistan, women's advancement must be addressed by quelling terrorism, eradicating poverty and addressing ignorance through education.
4. **Involvement of women in reconciliation processes.** Talks to consolidate peace in post-conflict settings should involve women at every stage. Such talks cannot compromise women's rights in any way and must strongly adhere to the principles of true democracy and women's political participation.
5. **The need for action, not words.** Steps forward must move women's rights beyond slogans and good intentions. The gender advisor to the Afghan Ministry of the Interior has found that "organizational inertia" is perhaps the main cause of problems associated with gender inequity in the government ministries. We need the political will and the genuine commitment that will transform words into action. And as the Paris Conference recently reminded us, international donors must fulfill their pledged aid so that efforts to improve women's standing can be sustained.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, to advance the protection of women in war and peace, the promotion of women's rights and the participation of women in peace processes, Afghanistan would like to emphasize the importance of addressing the threats of insecurity. Security is the first concern of post-conflict countries that hope to make progress in women's rights.

After security is addressed, the following lessons are important: recognition of the importance of international involvement, the importance of regional collaboration, the inclusion of women in reconciliation processes, and the need to move beyond words towards action.

Thank you for your time and consideration.