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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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Women, Peace and Security

Responding to the needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations for sustainable peace and security

**Statement by H.E. Mr Gary Quinlan
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations**

(Check against delivery)

Australia was an original co-sponsor of Security Council resolution 1325. We value the opportunity to address the Council today on the issue of responding to the needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations for sustainable peace and security. Women are powerful agents of change for peace and security. Early recognition of, and response to, the special needs of women and girls post-conflict helps to lay a solid foundation for sustainable peace. Australia is alert to this reality.

Mr President

Australia welcomes with appreciation the Secretary General's report. We welcome UNDP's deployment of senior gender advisers to Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Nepal. This undoubtedly aids a rapid response to the special needs of women and girls in the aftermath of conflict. We were particularly encouraged by the report's focus on the vital issue of access to social services such as education and health, including maternal and reproductive health.

We endorse all of the Secretary-General's recommendations and would like to address a few of them today.

First, we would value the convening in 2010 of a high level event to commemorate the tenth anniversary of resolution 1325. This would provide an invaluable opportunity to take stock of

implementation efforts and assess, at the highest levels, what remains to be done to capitalise on recent momentum towards enhanced implementation. We congratulate those 16 countries that have formulated national action plans. Australia would bring to a high level event concrete advice on further, practical measures on its implementation of resolution 1325.

Second, we agree that impunity for gender-based crimes must not be tolerated. We congratulate the Council for its adoption last week of resolution 1888. Implementation of that resolution is now required to ensure sustainable peace and security can be built in the many post-conflict societies affected by sexual violence. We are deeply concerned with the reported high prevalence of rape and other forms of grave sexual violence in Myanmar. The absence of effective judicial and security institutions to ensure accountability, prevent violence and combat impunity remains a pressing challenge in many post-conflict societies. Formal justice systems must provide accessible recourse for women.

Third, women's equal and full participation in all efforts toward the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as well as reconciliation, is critical. We agree that increasing women's role in decision-making bodies is key. In post-conflict situations, ensuring women are represented early, integrally and at all stages during peace negotiations will bolster the priority given to women's recovery needs and build a more solid peace. Improved electoral participation is also essential and we note with appreciation the report's focus on the efforts of Timor-Leste and its partners to enhance the quality and quantity of women's representation and participation in village council elections held earlier this year. This sets a helpful precedent in promoting gender-responsive reconstruction and local development agendas.

Fourth, we agree with the Secretary-General that an accurate, more coherent system of data collection is necessary to monitor progress, address gaps in implementation and better facilitate the sharing of best practices. When developing such tools, consideration should be given to collecting and analysing information on areas including female heads of households, women's land use patterns, access to credit, membership of agricultural cooperatives, participation in formal employment, reproductive health and educational status.

Finally, we welcome the General Assembly's recent progress towards establishing a composite United Nations gender entity and look forward to further strengthening of United Nations coordination on gender issues, including on women, peace and security matters.

Mr President

Womens' capacity for peacebuilding must be strengthened, particularly where women are themselves mobilising to end conflict and foster peace and reconciliation in their own communities.

Australia is partnering throughout the Pacific and Asia to build local and regional capacities. We were pleased to be involved in the 'Women for Peace' conference held in Timor-Leste in March and to support the travelling roadshow exhibition of that conference which strengthened women's roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. In the Pacific, we are also pleased to support the Regional Women's Community Media Network on Women, Peace and Security which raises awareness, and supports the implementation, of resolution 1325 through media initiatives in Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands as well as Bougainville in Papua New Guinea.

The role of civil society organisations is essential. We are encouraged by the sustained and concerted efforts of many individuals and organisations worldwide that campaign in this field. Australia was particularly pleased to support the 'Peace Talks' initiative of the International Women's Development Agency which raised awareness on implementation of resolution 1325 in the Pacific through training for civil society organisations from Solomon Islands, Tonga, Bougainville and Fiji.

Mr President

To conclude, while we recognise improvements in our united efforts to respond to the needs of women, and promote the role and voice of women, in post-conflict societies, further determined efforts are required. As we approach the tenth anniversary of resolution 1325, Australia recommits to this compelling objective.

