

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Resolution 1820
Thursday, June 19, 2008

Statement by H.E Ms. Jahan, Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on women and peace and security, an issue of particular interest to the delegation of Bangladesh. Allow me to recall, with a modicum of pride, that Bangladesh was closely associated with the elaboration and adoption of that landmark resolution, resolution 1325 (2000), as a then-member of the Council.

Women and girls are the main victims of conflict situations. The inherent discrimination and inequalities that women suffer, by and large, can be and often are further deepened in post-conflict situations. Also, in peace and conflict resolution processes, women are the ones who are the most deprived. Their voices are not fully listened to, or even heard. The international community has been increasingly forthcoming in its resolve to undertake concerted measures to prevent gender-based violence.

However, eight years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), sexual violence persists in conflict situations and in peace. We need to reflect further on how best we can address the issues of sexual violence, including its root causes. We need to analyse the challenges and how those can be overcome. There is no denying the fact that we need to ensure adequate representation of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention and in post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. The true measure of women's participation in peace negotiations is not through numbers, but through power in decision-making. In the consolidation of peace, although the role of women remains a vital factor, it is often ignored.

The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) has recorded some progress. We hope that the remaining shortcomings will be addressed in the updated 2008-2009 action plan. A number of constraints persist. There is an inadequate understanding of the gender dimension in conflict situations. That leads to gaps in capacity at the institutional and organizational levels to address various provisions of the resolution. Without adequate attention to and understanding of gender relations and inequalities, women will continue to remain excluded from peacebuilding initiatives. As a result of such situations, their needs are not fully understood. We need to further intensify our efforts in incorporating the gender perspective at all levels of peacebuilding. We also need to create expertise to address the issues related to sexual violence. One way to augment capacity is to facilitate women's participation in both formal and informal negotiations in the peace process.

The availability of gender-disaggregated data is particularly important in understanding the situation of women and girls who are victims of war and conflict. A focused examination of issues specifically related to violence against women is also important in the formulation of policy guidelines. That is an exercise that will assist in undertaking preventive measures. The sharing of experiences, good practices and lessons learned on a regular basis is useful not only in sustaining peace but also in guiding policy measures.

Peacekeeping operations are no longer limited to military activities. They now have broader mandates to assist in elections, monitor human rights and carry out police functions. Multifaceted peacekeeping operations thus have great potential in addressing the security of women. To that effect, we have successfully integrated the gender perspective in some aspects of United Nations peacekeeping operations. However, in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts much remains to be done. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, Bangladesh remains vigilant in our focus on the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000).

As one of the largest contributors of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh is ever conscious of our responsibility to incorporate gender dimensions, particularly the essential elements of resolution 1325 (2000). At present, Bangladesh has more than 30 women police personnel deployed in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The percentage of women as peacekeepers and police from Bangladesh are set to increase in coming days.

We recognize that a strong Security Council mechanism is needed to monitor the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Establishing a working group on women and peace and security might be useful and a good option in that regard. It is our belief that integrating the gender perspective across the United Nations system will keep in view geographical, cultural and ethnic factors. Adequate resources should also be mobilized to that

effect. The active involvement of civil society and non-governmental organizations is a sine qua non. We are of the view that the role of the media in enhancing the integration of women in peace processes is quite significant.

In conclusion, let me underline that ending impunity is a must. However, it is more important — indeed, crucial — to mobilize leadership, secure accountability, pool adequate resources, identify challenges and address root causes in protecting women and girls in wartime, as well as in peacetime.