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STATEMENT by
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- Security Council-
Open Debate
Women, Peace and Security

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Mr. President,

Croatia welcomes the Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security and the recommendations contained therein. We thank the delegation of China for organizing what is for us a timely debate, as well as the delegation of the United Kingdom for preparing the draft PRST, which we fully support.

The focus of today's debate is "*Women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security*". In this my delegation would like to emphasize several points. To begin, it should be emphasized that in many countries suffering from armed conflict, women peace builders are often faced with male dominated institutions. These women work under difficult conditions and the space given to their issues is often negligible. Women's issues tend to be organized apart from other issues of post-conflict civil society and their associated support groups, which would explain why women's empowerment and gender based violence is easily overlooked, making it easier to exclude women from decision-making structures that could enhance their security.

There has not been enough research conducted on the cross-border dimensions of armed conflict that stem from the uncontrolled movement of armed forces and groups across poorly patrolled frontiers, especially in places like the Sudan and the DRC region. Since no formal cross-border networks exist between women's peace-building groups, we believe that women's participation in regional peace-building institutions such as the Amani Forum in the Great Lakes region could be encouraged through, for example, the establishment of a task force to examine women-specific cross-border concerns.

Mr. President,

The expansion of women's roles as peace-builders is achievable, notwithstanding negative views that may arise on social change following armed conflict and a tendency by male dominated societies in post-conflict regions to undermine the new roles women can have in helping to resolve conflict and associated violence. Consideration should be given to including marginalized men such as former combatants or those in refugee or IDP camps in our efforts to support women's equal participation in peace processes, while governments should ensure that traditional practices are not misused by men to control women or to violate their rights.

The United Nations, national governments as well as individual donors should listen clearly to the views of women civil society organizations. These organizations in turn need to receive their fair share of professional education and support. It is a government's obligation to fulfill their responsibilities to establish and maintain women-friendly security, health and education services.

Women activists in many parts of the world suffering from armed conflict are struggling in their efforts to bring public attention to the fact that women and children, including infants, are faced with extremely high levels of violence, including sexual violence and abuse, by men. Its ongoing effects, long after war is over, should be a primary concern to those who advocate greater inclusion of women in peace-building institutions. Strategies

to prevent violence against women during armed conflict also include strategies to protect women's participation in reconstruction and democracy-building projects in its aftermath. We believe therefore that the Security Council should ensure the prompt and effective implementation of its resolution 1820.

Mr. President,

The Croatian national strategy for the promotion of gender equality 2006-2010 contains several measures related to promoting the application of Security Council resolution 1325 and commitments arising from the Beijing Platform. The national strategy also promotes the collection of data on the role of women during war and the hardships they face and their contribution to peace-building, while the consequences of war on women in Croatia will be systematically collected and analysed. The ensuing results and recommendations will be integrated into social and development policies.

Female experts on gender issues will be included in political activities related to peace-building, regional cooperation and national security. The representation of women in the Croatian Ministry of Defence and Croatia's Armed Forces will be increased, with special emphasis on increasing their representation in managerial positions. According to the *Long-term Development Plan of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2006 – 2015, by the year 2015* we expect that women will make up 10% of the operating staff of the armed forces. Moreover, the Ministry of Defence has recently established a Gender Equality Commission, a body in-charge of creating the appropriate environment for the expansion of women's presence in the armed forces.

Mr. President,

Although many women were victims in the wars that took place in South East Europe, they also had an active role in opposing armed conflict and building understanding and peace amongst the national groups of our region. For example, during the aggression committed against Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990's, when Croatia played host to over 300,000 internally displaced persons and as many refugees, women NGOs played an important role in providing psychological help, organizing humanitarian activities and establishing shelters for refugees and displaced persons regardless of their ethnic background. Similarly, the first attempts to initiate dialogue amongst the different sides in the conflict came from women and their organizations.

Mr. President,

Croatia, as a Troop and Police Contributing Country, is fully aware of the ongoing efforts aimed at improving the implementation of the resolution 1325 and the necessity of increasing the deployment of more women in peacekeeping missions. Croatia also uses sex-disaggregated data in order to better monitor and track progress in its reports on levels of military deployments to peacekeeping operations. Croatia will continue actively contributing to the goals of the 1325 resolution and beyond.

Thank you.