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Statement

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by

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**Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Croatia
to the United Nations**

at the

**Security Council
Open Debate**

Women and Peace and Security

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Mr. President,

Let me begin by extending our congratulations to you, and to your delegation on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and assuring you of the full support of my delegation. I also thank you and your delegation for initiating this meeting, and bringing the Council together to discuss an issue that is critically important to the Republic of Croatia, and surely to all nations.

Allow me to extend a warm welcome to Madame Michelle Bachelet, and wish her success in her future work as the first Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General of the newly established gender entity UN Women. Given her high political stature and experience, we deem that Madame Bachelet will enhance the gender equality agenda, and that the UN Women will grow into the principal voice for gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement as delivered by the representative of Belgium on behalf of the EU. Here, I would like to make additional remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President,

The adoption by the Security Council of the resolution 1325 bears testimony to the progress made, during the last decade, in the area of Women and peace and security. This historic resolution has raised the much needed attention to the question of women's empowerment, which represents a priority for my country. While all the resolutions on Women and peace and security are equally important, the 1325 serves as an umbrella resolution in addressing women's empowerment, their task as peace builders and their fragile position as victims of war.

The Republic of Croatia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of this landmark resolution (S/2010/498) the recommendations contained therein as well as the Presidential Statement to be adopted by the Council today. We call upon the Security Council to endorse the indicators as developed by the Secretary-General the Council as soon as possible.

The commitments set forth by the resolution are commendable, but translating words into action is the only way of solving the remaining issues. And the issues are many. As numerous situations on the agenda of this Council have shown, women still have a long way to go in order to fulfill the empowerment goals as well as to fully realize their human rights, both in times of war and peace. The empowerment of women is imperative for the full achievement of human rights, as well as for overall economic and political development and progress. Although women are widely recognized as effective agents of peace, they still have little access to decision-making positions and peace negotiations. More should be done.

Mr. President,

Armed conflicts continue to have a devastating impact on women and girls, and are often accompanied by gender based violence including an increasing scale and brutality of sexual violence, often used as a means of war. Impunity for such acts of violence against women is still prevalent, and the prosecution rate very low.

Even on Croatian territory, in the heart of Europe, rape was used as a method of intimidation and terror, during the aggression to which Croatia was exposed at the beginning of 1990s. We are fully aware of the role both the Security Council and international community can play in addressing sexual violence against women and girls, especially when used by political or military leaders as a means of achieving political or military objectives. We believe that the Security Council needs to provide strong and effective leadership on this issue, including by taking concrete action when necessary, with the ultimate aim of eradicating this abhorrent behavior. Such acts of violence demand further action by the Security Council to strengthen the rule of law and to end impunity. They need to be thoroughly investigated and perpetrators need to be brought to account, and it is therefore imperative for the International Criminal Court, as well as national courts, to be the last instance of justice for the victims and a reminder that there can be no tolerance for the crime of rape.

We are pleased to see that progress has been made in several areas and that the UN system continues to show a wide range of good practice. We encourage the strengthening of the coordination between UN agencies both at Headquarters and in the field, especially in monitoring and reporting on situations where parties to armed conflict engage in rape and other sexual violence as means of war. Nevertheless, more consistent and comprehensive reporting on sexual violence would enable the Council to address the protection of women and children in a more systematic manner, whereas the Council should include specific reporting requirements in resolutions establishing or renewing mandates.

Mr. President,

More needs to be done also on a national level. The integration of the resolution has to be country-driven; and Member States need to take responsibility for its success through ensuring that it is integrated into national policies. We urge countries to apply a broad gender mainstreaming approach across government, for instance through a system-wide approach that links development, humanitarian and defence issues. All plans should include civil society consultations as well as monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

I am pleased to say that Croatia has taken steps to integrate the gender perspective into the national security policy through its National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality as and is currently developing its National Action Plan on the implementation of the resolution 1325, which is expected to be adopted by 2011. Under the leadership of its first female Prime Minister, Her Excellency Ms Jadranka Kosor, Croatia will continue to give its firm support to all areas of the women, peace and security agenda. We see it as a “gender-based peace agenda”, which involves addressing the disproportionate effect of conflict on women and combating sexual violence. It is also about securing a full, equal and effective participation of women at all stages of the peace process, giving them an equal role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in peace-building. The realization of these goals is a basis for safeguarding basic human rights and achieving human security and lasting peace.

Thank you.