

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security- 23 October 2007**  
**Extract Verbatim Transcript / English S/PV.5766**

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

**Mrs. Booto** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to convey to you, Sir, our warm congratulations on your effective guidance of the Security Council's work in October. I should especially like to express my delegation's appreciation to the delegation of Ghana for taking the initiative of organizing this meeting on women, peace and security towards an effective and coherent implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which is the subject of today's debate.

My delegation fully endorses the statement made by the representative of Zambia on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community.

The Beijing Platform for Action highlighted the need to achieve gender equality through systematic national and international gender mainstreaming strategies. The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly allowed us to make a little progress towards gender equality and improving conditions for women.

The implementation of the pioneering resolution 1325 (2000), one aim of which is to integrate the gender dimension into all aspects of peace and security, has important objectives. It will entail, inter alia, establishing institutions capable of ensuring the protection of women and girls and their full participation in national, regional and international mechanisms for the prevention, management and settlement of disputes. The fulfilment of those aims will depend to a large extent on a well-motivated and sustained intervention by Member States, with the active support and cooperation of the United Nations and other partners, including the mobilization and participation of civil society. In that regard, Governments are called on to make the necessary efforts to strengthening women's capacities to contribute fully with their knowledge and skills.

My delegation shares the view already expressed by other delegations that it is also important for the Secretary-General to consider appointing more women as special representatives and envoys to conduct goodoffices missions in his name, and to seek to increase the role and contribution of women in United Nations operations on the ground as military observers, civilian police personnel, human rights specialists and members of humanitarian operations. Substantial progress has been achieved, but additional effort must be made to remove the last remaining obstacles to the full implementation of the resolution.

Violence against women and girls remains a major concern, calling for greater effort on the part of the entire international community, because such violence, as a violation of human rights, represents a major obstacle to implementing gender equality. Echoing the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly adopted resolution 61/143 on intensifying efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, which called on Member States and United Nations entities to step up their action to prevent and eliminate such violence. The Security Council replied to that appeal by keeping that issue on its agenda and reaffirming its commitment to implementing resolution 1325 (2000).

During a series of visits to my country, Council members were able to assess the efforts of the new freely and democratically elected Congolese authorities. They had in

particular an opportunity to gain an overview of the security situation. My delegation is highly concerned at the moment by the increased and unprecedented violence perpetrated by armed militias in the eastern part of the country. Such acts of violence, particularly sexual violence — systematic attacks on Congolese women and girls — are motivated by the inveterate need of the perpetrators to destroy an entire nation by assaulting the dignity and physical and moral integrity of its women.

Faced with that situation, my country's institutions in implementation of the law on sexual violence adopted by Parliament and enacted by the President of the Republic in 2006, are firmly resolved to crack down on all crimes of sexual violence and will ensure care for the victims. The Head of State himself is determined to come down very hard on the culprits behind such aberrations. He has made security one of his priorities in putting an end to such barbarous acts.

In that respect, support is vital if we are to give the regular forces substantive means of dealing with those armed groups. The militias operate with the financial and political support of foreign actors involved in the looting of our natural resources, which to this very day remains the major factor behind the longevity of the conflict.

Some countries have made systematic rape a weapon of war and have used HIV-infected soldiers in their sordid business of sexual violence against women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One of the most catastrophic consequences — the transmission of HIV/AIDS — continues to sow desolation in my country. The brutality of such rapes has also caused numerous cases of fistula, entailing the total destruction of the reproductive system. Although it deprives thousands of victims of sexual violence of their vitality and their hope, that scourge does not make front-page headlines.

In that regard, I wish to pay tribute to the First Lady of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mrs. Olive Lembe Kabila, who, as a mother and woman of action, has become directly involved in appealing to the conscience of all in such cases. She has played an active role in the campaign organized by the national programme for reproductive health and is caring for victims of sexual violence, with the support of medical agencies and teams providing pro bono surgery for victims. The campaign has also sought to inform the national community of the existence of that disorder and above all to educate political actors about the disasters caused by armed conflict.

I take this opportunity to recall once again that the Democratic Republic of the Congo attaches special importance to the contribution of women to the promotion of peace and in all areas of life. We vigorously condemn all sexual violence in all armed conflicts, as well as all sexual assault and exploitation committed by any party whatsoever, including United Nations personnel. We stress the need to eradicate impunity. If we are to eliminate this scourge, it is important to take preventative measures and to punish the perpetrators. My delegation therefore supports the zero-tolerance policy adopted by the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, I thank members of the Council for their significant contributions to the efforts to re-establish lasting peace and reconciliation in my country. My delegation hopes that this Security Council debate will contribute to strengthening awareness of the importance of the role of women in maintaining peace and security and in peacebuilding.