

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Ragaglini Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations.

Allow me to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate of the Security Council. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and Ms. Bineta Diop, President and Founder of Femmes Africa Solidarité.

Italy aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union, and wishes to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

We welcome the debate's focus on the contribution of women's organizations to preventing and settling armed conflicts and to fostering peacebuilding. Throughout the world, women's rights advocates are fighting, and at times risking their lives, to ensure that women and girls are not excluded from decision-making about the political future of their country. They are fighting to ensure that their voices are heard when peace agreements are brokered and that they receive justice when the dignity of women is violated. We are here not only to pay tribute to their work and courage, but also to pledge concrete action to work with them towards together realizing the women and peace and security agenda.

Italy recalls the Secretary-General's appeal to involve women's organizations from the early stages of conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. That should become standard practice. Women leaders also have an important role to play in transitions, including in the drawdown of United Nations and international missions, when the previous gains in gender equality can be at risk. As a country engaged in peace missions in the world, Italy is committed to ensuring that respect for women's rights is strengthened during such critical phases.

We cannot promote the participation of women and girls unless we ensure their full protection. The Security Council must be vigilant in that regard. The targeting of women human rights defenders is a matter of grave concern. The Secretary-General's report (S/2012/732) describes the use of sexual violence as a conflict tactic across a wide range of scenarios. Greater efforts are needed to increase the prosecution of such crimes at both the national and the international levels and to address the needs of survivors. In that regard, we welcome the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and we stand ready to support her fully in that endeavour.

Italy welcomes the presidential statement adopted by the Security Council on 31 October (S/PRST/2012/23) and the reaffirmation of its commitment to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and the follow-up resolutions. We strongly urge the Council to live up to that commitment, in particular by ensuring that all decisions on country-specific and thematic issues, as well as the authorization or renewal of mission mandates, are reviewed in terms of their impact on women and girls. We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to increasing women's participation and representation in conflict resolution and prevention efforts. Women are formidable negotiators, mediators and peacebuilders. They are a resource that we cannot afford to leave untapped.

Italy is a long-standing supporter of the women and peace and security agenda. In December 2010, we adopted a three-year action plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000). Next year, we will review the plan in order to assess its progress. Action plans and strategies are indeed a critical tool to advance implementation and to enhance accountability at both the national and the regional levels. We also welcome the increasing work done by regional organizations, such as NATO, to mainstream women and peace and security in their action.

Support to Governments and civil society through development cooperation programmes has been another key component of Italy's efforts to advance the agenda, particularly in Afghanistan, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

I wish to conclude by echoing the Secretary-General. Effective conflict prevention is inevitably embedded in long-term investments in women's and girls' empowerment and in support for women's efforts to build peace. If we are serious about peace, we must also be serious about the rights of women and girls. The better we understand that equation, the more successful we will be in our efforts to ensure peace and development throughout the world.