

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

Statement by Ms. Freimane-Deksne Permanent Mission of Latvia to the United Nations.

Latvia aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union and would like to make a few remarks in our national capacity.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2012/732) and Ms. Bachelet, Mr. Ladsous and Ms. Diop for their statements.

The topic of today's debate is of particular importance. The sustainable political, social and economic development of a country is possible only with a strong civil society that is involved in all stages of decision-making, including in conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding. Women's civil society organizations play a particular role in that regard by voicing women's rights and concerns early on, laying the foundations for non-discriminatory and inclusive decision-making processes and, most importantly, contributing to overall international peace and security.

In order to increase the representation of women's civil society leaders in peace processes and post-conflict peace consolidation, formal arrangements — such as on the security of women human rights defenders, security prior to and during elections and childcare arrangements — and capacity-building in leadership, conflict analysis and negotiation skills should be provided. Capacity development for women's leaders and organizations during and after conflict is crucial for women's further effective participation in the political and economic life of a country.

Latvia participates in capacity-building in several conflict situations and post-conflict countries. Women's leadership, participation and economic empowerment are among the main priorities of our capacity- building initiatives. Latvia has shared its experience and implemented projects in Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries. In all those initiatives, the Latvian Government has closely cooperated with women's civil society organizations, and activities in that regard continue. Women's non-governmental organizations in Latvia are also implementing their own capacity- building projects, for example by facilitating the establishment of women's resource centres in Central Asia, sharing expertise in the prevention of human trafficking and providing assistance to victims in Iraq.

Latvia believes that women's political leadership and economic empowerment are key to ensuring women's participation in the prevention of conflict, conflict resolution and long-term recovery efforts. They are also part of UN-Women's main thematic priority and, as a member of the UN-Women Executive Board beginning in January 2013, Latvia will contribute to their implementation. To reaffirm Latvia's commitment to promoting the empowerment of women at both the national and international levels, Latvia expressed its intent to join the Equal Futures Partnership at the launch event hosted by Secretary of State Clinton on 24 September, as well as to announce new commitments in that regard in the spring of 2013.

We fully agree with the statement made by Ms. Bachelet in the Security Council in April (see S/PV.6759) that we should build on women's role as agents of conflict resolution and sustained recovery, without focusing exclusively on the way conflict victimizes women. The role of women is important in the whole crisis cycle, from the prevention and resolution of conflict to peacebuilding, post-conflict reconciliation and reintegration. Women leaders and women's organizations can provide important input in decreasing the challenges facing women in conflict zones and can function as early-warning mechanisms to prevent backsliding on women's rights and to sustain progress in women's protection.

The international community's involvement in scaling up women's community initiatives and improving their access to national and international dialogue and mediation processes is of particular relevance. The Security Council recognized as much in its presidential statement on this topic last year (S/PRST/2011/20). Women civil society representatives should be systematically invited to participate in international dialogues, contact groups, international engagement events and donor conferences, as well as regularly consulted on conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. The Security Council should provide regular and even responses to women's peace and security concerns by, inter alia, inserting specific instructions for women's engagement in the establishment and renewal of mandates, ensuring regular reporting on women's human rights violations by United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions and continuing to use Arria Formula meetings and other formats to facilitate open dialogue with women's civil society representatives.

Moreover, the United Nations itself should live up to its own standards by ensuring women's adequate representation in peacekeeping operations at different levels and by improving training on gender-specific issues for military and police in peacekeeping missions. The United Nations gender expertise is crucial for capacity-building and for increased engagement of women's civil society representatives in peace-making and peacebuilding processes, as demonstrated by recent examples in South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. In that regard, Latvia welcomes the formalization of the gender expert position in the Mediation Support Standby Team and the inclusion of gender advisers in all multidimensional peacekeeping operations and political missions. We look forward to the results of the review on how gender expertise is structured and deployed within the United Nations system.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Latvia's commitment to the promotion of gender equality and the participation of women and their civil society organizations at all levels and in different contexts of decision-making. We encourage further coordinated work by United Nations institutions and Member States in effectively implementing resolution 1325 (2000).