

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
Tuesday, 26th October 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam, Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations

Allow me first to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important and timely debate. Allow me also to thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Mrs. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General; Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; His Excellency Mr. Hamidon Ali, President of the Economic and Social Council; and Ms. Thelma Awori for their briefings. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Ministers participating in our debate today.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), let us take this opportunity to examine the progress that has been achieved, as well as the challenges that persist. Over the past decade, the United Nations system, Member States and civil society have made significant efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000) through a wide spectrum of measures and initiatives. Considerable progress has been made in increasing awareness of the threat that sexual violence constitutes to peace and security and of the cost of excluding women from peace processes. In the 10 years since the adoption of the resolution, many steps have been taken on the ground, including increasing the number of gender advisers, the adoption of guidelines for field action and the elaboration of a System-wide Action Plan. Member States have organized consultations and developed national action plans, and civil society organizations have stepped up their activities to support the role of women in areas of conflict and post-conflict. The creation of a new United Nations gender entity and the appointment of President Michelle Bachelet as its head, the appointment of Ms. Margot Wallström as the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the creation of a High-Level Steering Committee for Women, Peace and Security have generated unique momentum within the United Nations and beyond.

However, despite these important efforts, the conditions that women and girls face in situations of armed conflict continue to be abhorrent, and effective methods for monitoring the impact of the measures put in place to protect them are lacking, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2010/498). Rape continues to be used unabated as a weapon of war, as the events of July 2010 in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo shockingly reminded us. Out of 300 peace agreements negotiated since 1989, only 18 contain even a passing reference to sexual violence, which remains the least-condemned war crime. Of particular concern is the problem of sexual violence against displaced women, a phenomenon that is widespread and growing. One way to ensure prevention and a more effective response to such acts of violence is through the dissemination of the guidelines established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

As they care for their families and raise their children, women play a crucial role in restoring the fabric of society and overcoming war wounds. Yet, their own wounds are still not being properly remedied. In that regard, reforming the security sector and ensuring respect for the rule of law in a gender responsive manner is of crucial importance. Conflict and post-conflict societies should be assisted in those areas at the earliest possible moment in order to ensure that the police and military do not abuse the very population whom they are supposed to be protecting.

In recent peace negotiations, women represented less than 8 per cent of the participants and less than 3 per cent of the signatories. That endangers the prospects for long-lasting peace since women are crucial partners in shoring up three of its pillars: economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy, as affirmed by the Secretary-General in his recent report (S/2010/466).

Including women in peace talks is not enough by itself. In some post-conflict societies, women who have been victims of sexual violence, widows and orphan girls are ostracized, exacerbating the challenges that they must overcome and compromising the prospects for enduring peace. Hence, more concerted efforts must be made in order to raise awareness among men and sensitize them to the importance of safeguarding women's rights for durable peace and the well-being of society as a whole.

A shortfall in the financing of women's needs in post-conflict recovery plans persists. Donors could play a very constructive role in that regard by supporting women's and girls' education. Donors should also help women to attain economic independence through land ownership, micro-enterprise and skills training.

As pointed out by the Secretary-General, Member States must ensure that their support for women's engagement in peacebuilding is consistent. While Governments have the primary responsibility to take action in their countries, when need be, they must be able to count on the predictable support of United Nations partners. Despite the increase in female participation in United Nations missions, only 3 percent of uniformed peacekeepers and 8 per cent of United Nations police are women. Increasing their numbers would help improve the sense of security of women in vulnerable situations.

Finally, efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000) should be more coherent. There is, therefore, a need for a strategic framework that includes well-defined targets and indicators. The preliminary set of indicators annexed to the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/498), is an important tool for taking stock of the progress achieved and for tracking the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in conflict and post-conflict situations. The indicators should not be seen as a reporting obligation, but rather as a means to facilitate Member States' engagement. Progress should not be measured exclusively through data and figures, and each indicator should be read in its specific context.

Over the next decade, our success in protecting women in conflict situations will be measured by the real impact that our actions have on the ground. The framework and tools are there. Let us make sure that we back them with the necessary political will.