

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security – 29 October 2008
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MYANMAR

Mr. Lwin (Myanmar): I would like to express our appreciation to you, Sir, for organizing this important debate on women and peace and security. I also thank you for giving me the floor to take part in this open debate.

I wish to thank the Chinese delegation for its very useful concept paper (S/2008/655), which focuses on women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

We live in a changing world in which States Members of the United Nations increasingly recognize that achieving durable peace requires the full involvement and equal participation of women in conflict resolution and subsequent peacebuilding. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), adopted eight years ago, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, underscore the convention that peace is inextricably linked with the equality of women and men.

In situations of armed conflict, women and girls are among the most vulnerable. Even after the war has ended, the deteriorating economic situation heightens women's vulnerability to being trafficked. Women are also likely to experience discrimination and domestic violence on their return to their village or town of origin. In those circumstances, we must act together to redress the situation and ensure that there is zero tolerance with regard to violence against women and girls.

Myanmar fully supports a zero-tolerance policy. Throughout our history, women have always enjoyed a special place in the family and society. Our traditions, culture and values reflect our efforts to promote gender equality. Successive Governments have also endeavoured to protect women and girls from genderbased violence, including sexual exploitation and abuses. The Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs was established in 1996 to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Subsequently, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation was formed in 2003 to protect women from discrimination and to ensure their full enjoyment of their rights.

Myanmar shares the view that the best way to protect civilians, particularly women and children, in armed conflict is to prevent such conflicts. My country has experienced first-hand the devastating effect of insurgency. Only recently, owing to the national reconciliation policy of my Government, we have emerged from under the dark clouds of conflict. The insurgency that has ravaged the country for four decades is virtually over, as 17 out of 18 major insurgent groups have come back into the legal fold. Today, only remnants of the last insurgent group and narcotrafficking armed groups remain as outlaws. Peace and stability now prevail in almost all corners of Myanmar. It has resulted in significant improvement in the daily life of civilians, in particular women and children.

My delegation joins the international community in its condemnation of sexual assault and other forms of violence committed against civilians in armed conflict, particularly women and girls. We must work together to prevent that.

The combined efforts of our countries, the United Nations system and civil society over the past eight years have contributed to changing, to some extent, the lot of women in many conflict and post-conflict situations. Political will and resources will be needed to turn the small gains achieved into significant steps.