

29 October 2008

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

I thank the Security Council for the invitation to speak here today and to continue the valuable practice of engaging and hearing from civil society. I am speaking on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, a coalition of international civil society organizations formed in 2000 to advocate for a UN Security Council resolution on women, peace and security. With the adoption of resolutions 1325 in 2000, and 1820 in June this year, we now advocate for the full and effective implementation of these resolutions, and for the particular concerns of women in conflict affected-situations to be addressed consistently and substantively by the UN system, and by Member States.

Our coalition members are Amnesty International, Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights, Femmes Africa Solidarité, Global Action to Prevent War, Global Justice Center, Hague Appeal for Peace, Human Rights Watch, International Action Network on Small Arms, International Alert, International Women's Tribune Center, Women's Action for New Directions, Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Eight years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325, there has been a great deal more talk about the protection and promotion of women's human rights in conflict-affected situations. There has been much progress across a broad range of issues, and many new actors are now positively engaged in driving forward this agenda. However, in many areas action and implementation have been inconsistent. It is necessary now to move from words to action.

It is necessary now to move from *ad hoc* approaches, and towards ensuring that the intentions reflected in resolutions 1325 and 1820 become a systematic and regular part of the work of this Council, of the UN system, and of all Member States.

The Security Council was certainly quite clear in its intentions regarding women's participation in resolution 1325. It stressed "the importance of [women's] equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution," it recognized that "[women's] protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security,"

This commitment to women's full and equal participation is more than an abstract concept. To discharge this mandate requires concrete action. It requires concrete action to ensure women's right to actively participate in all levels of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding is respected and fulfilled. It also requires concrete action to address the substantive issues that women in specific country-situations identify as priority concerns.

The NGO Working Group takes this opportunity today to focus on three critical areas deserving particular attention. First: the under-representation of women in peace processes. Second: the under-representation of women in the UN system. Third: the need to ensure that women are fully involved in the design and implementation of Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement (DDRRR) programmes.

1) As regards **peace processes**, UNIFEM's statistics are staggering and bear repeating. Since 2000, women averaged 7% of negotiators in five major UN peace processes. Fewer than 3% of the signatories in 14 peace talks were women.

It is not enough to acknowledge the right of women to participate in peace processes. Mediators and negotiators, and donor governments must address the very real obstacles to women's physical presence at the negotiation table and at any behind-the-scenes or after-hours negotiations. For example, in practice, many women in such situations are not members of the warring parties coming to the table, and will not have access to the resources made available to those parties. Women may also have family obligations that men do not have. In order then to participate on an equal footing with men, women may need support for childcare, transportation, accommodation, and personal security.

While there have been some important initiatives by UNIFEM and others – in Northern Uganda, for example, to pay attention to these issues and to support women, the support needs to be systematic and needs to be integrated in all peace processes. Within the UN system, the Department of Political Affairs is a key player. But, the lack of a funded and well-supported Gender Adviser Unit in that Department is limiting. Gender Units in other UN entities, such as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, have proven a positive influence. It has now been four years since the Secretary-General recommended the establishment of such Gender unit in DPA. We look forward to Member States making this happen. We also look forward to progress being made on the creation of a well-resourced women-specific UN entity with the capacity and presence at the operational level to further drive these efforts.

2) UN efforts to help ensure women's participation in peace processes must also take place "at home". This brings me to the issue of **leadership within the UN**. Women are dramatically under-represented in the UN's 30 Missions and should be appointed to more leadership positions. It is laudable that in Liberia (UNMIL), there now is a female Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and Deputy SRSG. It is, however, unacceptable that those are some of the only examples of appointments of women in high-level leadership. It is also unacceptable that the all-female police contingent in Liberia is seen as such a novelty. In addition to reforms needed at the national level to enable more women to participate in these UN missions, there should also be a clear and transparent process for Member States to submit names of women to the Secretary-General for appointments to high-level posts.

The presence of women at the field level, particularly in leadership, encourages other women and girls to participate and lead; it demonstrates that peacekeeping missions are committed to including all voices; and it is shown to both decrease sexual and gender-based violence and to increase the reporting of occurrences of sexual violence.

Sexual violence is not an issue disconnected from the issue of participation. The stark reality is that those affected by or living in fear of sexual violence are less able to participate in political processes and have less access to the justice system. Member States must increase the number of women in the judiciary and legal professions in conflict-affected situations as a means of increasing women's access to justice and ending impunity for sexual and gender-based violence.

In Afghanistan for example, the government, UN and donors must direct the necessary resources to meet the National Action Plan for Women's benchmarks on women's participation in official bodies. Impunity for violence is directly counter to the rule of law and thus, ultimately, to peace.

The link between violence and participation then is also relevant in key processes in the transition from conflict. This then brings me to the third area of concern.

3) **DDRRR.** A short survey of recently ended conflicts shows that women's issues are more often than not neglected in conflict transformation policies, such as rule of law and justice reform. In conflict transformation processes, continued violence against women essentially means a continuation of the conflict—sometimes even with the same weapons. Often laws passed as part of reconstruction do not prioritize the issue of small arms and violence against women, and do not recognize that gun-related domestic violence increases during and after conflict. When DDRRR issues are raised during negotiations, this should be used as an opportunity to recognize the impact of these laws on women, and that these laws can break the continuing cycle of violence against women – and ensure their meaningful participation in the transformation of their society.

Because this is what the commitments of 1325 and 1820 are about: the transformation of society. Eight years after resolution 1325 was adopted by consensus in this Council chamber, women need to see results. By working to ensure the creation of a well-funded Gender Unit in DPA, the appointment of women to senior UN leadership positions, and that reconstruction legislation that takes women into account, you will be taking concrete action to ensure women are truly present in all aspects of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.

Finally, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security thanks you for your time and attention here today. As you move forward with your daily work on the Security Council, with your daily work as Member States within the UN and at the national level, or with your daily work within the UN system, always ask yourself these three key questions:

- Where are the women?
- Why are they not part of these processes?
- What can I do to change this?

Thank you Mr President.