

PORTUGAL

Security Council Open Debate on

“Women Peace and Security”

Statement by H.E. Ambassador João Salgueiro
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

New York, 29 October 2008

Thank you Mr. President,

Let me start by join others in thanking the President of the SC for holding this open debate on this very important matter. I also would like to thank the Special Adviser of the SG, Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Under-SG for Peacekeeping Operations Mr. Alan Le Roy, the Executive Director of UNIFEM Ms. Ines Alberdi and Ms. Sarah Taylor, Coordinator of the NGO working group on Women, Peace and Security for their fruitful and comprehensive interventions on the present situation of women regarding peace and security.

Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered by France on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. President,

The adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 represented a landmark in the promotion and protection of human rights. It brought to the attention of this organ the pressing issue of gender equality and empowerment of women, but it also made clear that women have a role to play in conflict situations – besides being victims – as peacemakers and peacekeepers.

We must ensure that women's voices are heard in all stages, from conflict prevention to conflict resolution and of course during post-conflict processes. It is our belief that equal participation of women and men in decision making processes has a positive impact in the international security system, thus favoring the implementation of the SC objectives: peace and security.

Besides the need to overcome the marginalization of women in all decision-making stages related to peace building and conflict resolution, it is fundamental to develop policies that envisage the promotion of women's political, economic and social roles in post-conflict situations. In fact, situations of conflict have a great impact on women. They are most of the time victims of violence, including sexual violence and its use as a weapon of war, and at the same time they also become the main providers of economic security and survival to their families, often as households' heads. There is thus the need to ensure that in post-conflict situations we build on their experiences and create opportunities to empower women in their societies.

Mr. President

Portugal reaffirms its commitment to the full implemer.tation of resolution 1325, and in this regard would like to inform the Security Council that we are currently drafting our national plan of action to contribute to the implementation of this milestone document at the national, regional and international policy levels.

The drafting is being prepared by a multidisciplinary team involving members of various governmental entities and ministries, namely Foreign Affairs, Justice, Internal Affairs, Defense and Presidency of the Council of Ministers responsible for Gender Equality policies. At an early stage several members of civil society were invited to send contributions and this participation will continue throughout the process including the implementation phase. In what concerns the

contents of the Plan our main focus is on the need to promote the participation of women at all stages of peace processes, namely in peacekeeping missions, including in decision-making positions. Also extremely relevant is to ensure that all actors involved in peacekeeping missions, especially those at the high ranking level, receive adequate gender sensitive training. Finally, the need to prevent and combat as well as provide assistance to women and girls victims of violence in conflict and post-conflict situations will also be at the core of the Plan.

In order to have adequate policies to deal with perpetrators of sexual violence and to provide victims with the support they require (health and psychological support, access to the labour market and their children's access to education), it is fundamental the recognition by all parties to the conflict that sexual abuses were committed and that women's voice are heard during the peace negotiation talks. As recent history has shown us, disregarding these matters will only serve to perpetuate impunity and impede the development of integral and efficient policies to address women's needs.

In this regard, let me also welcome the adoption of resolution 1820. Sexual violence, as the Security Council has now recognized, is indeed a security problem, including when used as a weapon of war. We should all strive to end this plight.

Mr. President,

We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Secretary-General's campaign "Unite to end violence against women". Portugal too is continuously striving to combat this affliction, in particular in the domestic sphere.

We welcome every opportunity to address resolution 1325. However, we believe that the implementation of this resolution should be a daily task. A gender perspective should be mainstreamed into the Security Council work. We hope that, in light of the new UN gender architecture this situation would be revised. In this regard, let me express Portugal's hope that an agreement on the new strengthened and consolidated UN entity for women is reached during this session of the GA.

Thank you Mr. President