

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security – 5 October 2009
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South Africa

Ms. Rulumeni (South Africa): Allow me to express our sincere gratitude to you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate on such an important matter. South Africa welcomes the open debate and believes that it is also timely, leading the processes in preparation for the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security in 2010. South Africa aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the African Union (AU) later today.

Resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted nine years ago. Consistent with the resolution, the theme today is “Responding to the needs of women and girls in postconflict situations for sustainable peace and security”. It is designed to examine how Member States and international and regional organizations could further improve women’s participation in all stages of peace processes, particularly in conflict resolution, postconflict planning and peacebuilding, including by enhancing their engagement in decision-making in the early stages of recovery processes. While women may be the first casualties of war, they remain active agents of change and play a meaningful role in the recovery and reintegration of their families. Women are also instrumental in bringing about democracy and reconciliation in post-conflict societies.

The African Union and subregional organizations offer several advantages in the pursuit of effective conflict prevention and resolution. Therefore, the Assembly of the African Union, in its efforts to promote the participation of women in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and security, has taken concrete steps and pledged that the organs of the AU and the regional economic communities and member States, using the frameworks of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), will integrate gender policies, programmes and activities on conflict and peace. That would ensure that women participate fully in conflict resolution and management processes.

Subregionally, gender equality and the empowerment of women are among the founding principles of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and are enshrined in the SADC Treaty. We have been greatly honoured by the leadership and important contribution of women in recent peace processes and negotiations in our region. On 17 August 2008, the SADC heads of State signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which has been hailed as an important step towards the empowerment of women, the elimination of discrimination and the achievement of gender equality and equity.

In the context of peace and security, the Protocol stipulates that the States parties shall endeavour to put in place measures to ensure that women have equal representation and participation in key decisionmaking positions in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes by 2015, in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000). Furthermore, the Protocol specifies that States parties shall, during times of armed conflict, take such steps as are

necessary to prevent and eliminate incidences of human rights abuses, especially of women and children, and also to ensure that the perpetrators of such abuses are brought to justice before courts of competent jurisdiction.

There is an urgent need to advocate more strongly for the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. We also believe that all actors to the binding resolution should devote their attention to ensuring sufficient resources, the capacity to address the challenges and empowerment through educational programmes so as to increase the awareness and understanding of how to find lasting solutions. We encourage Member States to finalize and concretize national action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) that provide for the necessary training of women and men alike.

South Africa continues to support the work of the United Nations and of the African Union in promoting the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as well as in protecting women and girls against sexual violence. From our experience in the SADC region, we have learned that it is important to build solidarity among all role players, particularly women, and therefore we remain committed to working within a consultative and collaborative framework to find peaceful and lasting solutions to conflicts.

To that end, we believe it important for women in local communities to be allowed to participate in finding solutions for the reconstruction and rebuilding of their countries. The importance of equal representation and participation of women in formal peace processes and at negotiating tables cannot be overemphasized.

The primary responsibility for preventing and protecting women and girls in conflict situations and their aftermath should not lie with the international community alone. That would assist in promoting local ownership in peace processes. South Africa remains committed to the full and effective implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009). We in the international community have an obligation to women to ensure that their rights are protected and that their place in all aspects of the peace process is assured.

In conclusion, my delegation will continue to support the work of the United Nations and of the African Union in promoting the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as well as in protecting women and girls in post-conflict situations and their aftermath.