

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security  
October 2014, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Menelaou, Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations*

I am honoured to address the Security Council on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus on today's important topic, and we wish to warmly congratulate you, Madam President, on taking that initiative. Cyprus would also like to align itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Cyprus has direct experience of the subject under discussion through the role of women in the context of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), and through women's role in our country's struggle for liberation and reunification. Resolution 1325 (2000) mandates that women should participate in making and keeping peace. The adoption at the highest level of such a resolution is testament to the Council's recognition of the gender inequities in that regard. It arises from an understanding of armed conflict's disproportionate impact on women and girls, and the importance of enhancing their contributions to conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Unfortunately, 14 years after the resolution's adoption, we are still seeing a gap between the aspirations of the global and regional commitments and the realities of peace processes. My Government remains committed to implementing resolution 1325 (2000) within the Cyprus peace process, where there is admittedly plenty of room for progress.

My delegation welcomes the emphasis of today's discussion on displaced women and girls as leaders and survivors. We deplore the fact that in current conflicts civilians and women are increasingly purposely targeted and that sexual and gender-based violence is deliberately employed as a war strategy. Numerous international and regional human rights and international humanitarian law instruments are aimed at protecting women during armed conflict, and yet today women and children make up three quarters of the refugee and internally displaced population. The role of women as leaders is essential in enabling their protection needs to be identified and responded to.

Cyprus would like to take this opportunity to underline the important role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts. It is vital that peacekeeping operations work to improve the gender balance in peacekeeping mission staff, including at senior management levels. The presence of women in peacekeeping operations empowers women in the host community to serve as role models; enables women to train female cadets at police and military academies; gives women and children a greater sense of security; improves access and support for local women and focuses attention on the specific needs of female ex-combatants during the process of their demobilization and reintegration into civilian life.

We note with pleasure that five women are currently leading peace operations, including Lisa Bittenheim of the United States in my own country. We are also pleased to note the appointment of Major General Kristin Lund as Force Commander of UNFICYP, the first woman ever to serve as Force Commander of a United Nations peacekeeping operation. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus is the first in the world to have a dual female leadership. As Major General Lund has mentioned, in order to face a challenge, it is important that the other 50 per cent of the population be represented in the peacekeeping forces.

Being under foreign occupation for the past 40 years, my country has had direct experience of the disproportionate effects of conflict on women. One third of our population consists of internally displaced persons, deprived of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. During all those years, the country's struggle for reunification has borne the mark of the women's movement, as women have provided shelter and relief to victims in the aftermath of war, struggled to learn the fate of missing persons, participated in the international legal and political effort to restore the rights of the displaced, worked to raise international awareness and promoted a message of peace, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

Our recent history makes us sensitive to similar experiences worldwide. For that reason, Cypriot women have been particularly active throughout the years in international humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross and have made important contributions in solidarity and humanitarian aid campaigns.

In conclusion, I would like to mention the words of Hester Paneras of South-Africa, the Police Commissioner of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the first woman to hold the top police position in a peacebuilding mission of such magnitude:

“Opening up to alternative approaches is very important, but the most important thing is to show that it does not have to be like that. You can get out of it.”