

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

Statement by Mr. Thoms, Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations

Let me first of all thank today's briefers for their insightful presentations, and Argentina for organizing this open debate.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

We welcome the presidential statement adopted by the Council today (S/PRST/2014/21) and the detailed analysis of the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/693), which identifies many achievements on the women and peace and security agenda in the past years, but also the challenges remaining in order to ensure an effective and meaningful participation of women in all conflict-related settings. We share the view expressed by the Secretary-General that the review processes in 2015 should be used for greater synergies to strengthen the rights and participation of women.

The plight of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) is growing ever more alarming, and women and girls make up more than half of those displaced. The crises in Syria, South Sudan and the Central African Republic and the growing number of people fleeing from the terror of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant have given rise to those numbers.

Over past years, we have witnessed targeted violence against women and girls, often committed in front of family members, being used as a tactic of warfare to terrorize local populations and break down community structures. That development has forced many people to leave their homes and their lives behind in order to protect their families and themselves. We need to ensure that women and girls — but also men and boys — who have suffered from violence receive adequate psychological counselling, especially all the necessary health-care services, to go from being a victim of violence to becoming a survivor.

We also cannot forget those refugees who have spent decades away from their homes, as many Afghans, Somalis and Congolese have. Their experience shows us that we cannot just focus on the immediate needs of refugees, but need to consider the long-term task of enabling them to lead a life of dignity and determine their own fate. Education is a key factor for children who grow up in situations of displacement. Only quality education can lead to change, enabling future adults to have a self-determined life and to not simply be defined as a refugee.

The dire situation of the Syrian refugees, especially women and children, has been the focus of many debates over the past years. In response to the request of Syria's neighbours and urgent calls for action by the United Nations, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier invited 20 ministers and heads of United Nations agencies to a conference on the Syrian refugee situation, which took place today in Berlin and was co-chaired with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Participants agreed to strengthen medium-term humanitarian assistance and to mobilize additional development assistance in order to increase the resilience of communities and refugees in the face of what has already become a protracted situation. The conference has strengthened the bond between the international community and the host countries in the region in

recognition of their hospitality towards millions of refugees. Participants agreed to pay particular attention to the situation of women and girls.

In addition to taking political leadership, Germany has financed many concrete projects over the past years to support women in situations of displacement and their reintegration into society. To name but a few examples, we have funded projects for refugee camps in Jordan, Turkey and Iraq aimed at empowering women by supporting their common kitchen initiatives and creating child-friendly spaces. In Lebanon, Syrian women were trained in health care, hygiene and family planning in order to enable them to make informed decisions about their lives. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, repatriated women were supported in their reintegration into economic activities and trained in organization and management skills.

In Germany itself, where we welcome increasing numbers of refugees, we have introduced a free nationwide multilingual helpline for women who are affected by violence. The specialized personnel giving initial counselling and guidance include experts on the issues of violence suffered in conflict settings.

Women in displacement settings have great potential to be future leaders in their communities and countries. That potential cannot be wasted. We need to empower women in those situations and provide education and vocational training to them, especially in camps. They should be trained in order to take up positions in the management of refugee camps.

While we focus today's debate on displacement settings, we need to keep the full women and peace and security agenda in mind at all times for all conflict and post-conflict settings. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of effective, meaningful and real participation by women in conflict prevention, conflict management, peace negotiations, transitional justice and recovery efforts. It is not enough to merely let them be observers or beneficiaries of decision-making processes. The United Nations needs to ensure that women are involved in all United Nations-led peace and reconciliation processes. In that regard, we welcome the new gender forward-looking strategy for 2014-2018 of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. The United Nations needs to set a good example and include women at all levels if we want others to follow. Civil society organizations can also play an important role. They can connect women's organizations, train representatives and therefore empower women to take their rightful place in all decision-making.

We believe that the Security Council can play a stronger role in this regard and implement the women and peace and security resolutions directly in this very Chamber. The Council should start to systematically mainstream women's issues in all relevant spheres of its work. Whenever the Security Council is mandating or renewing mandates for United Nations missions or requesting briefings from envoys and special representatives, the issue of women and peace and security should be a central part of all considerations, as called for in the presidential statement adopted today.

Germany will continue its support to UN-Women and all other relevant actors, including civil society organizations, to ensure that women's roles and their important contribution in conflict resolution and peacebuilding are adequately taken into account.