

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

Statement by Mr. Ružička, Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the United Nations

Thank you very much, Madam President, for this excellent initiative of holding this debate on women and peace and security. We commend the excellent work of the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, and all the participants in today's debate. We welcome the key role that UN-Women has been playing in empowering women and eliminating violence against women and girls through various activities and instruments.

While aligning ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, I wish to make few additional points in my national capacity.

Resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, adopted almost 14 years ago, underlines the importance of the equal participation of women and their full involvement in efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. Despite many endeavours and achievements, not all commitments have been satisfactorily met or implemented. Armed conflict affects women harder than men. They are often deprived of their rights and are subject to violence. Violence against women constitutes not only human rights abuse, it is increasingly becoming a security issue. Targeting civilians, women and children is an extremely abhorrent act that must be punished accordingly.

Women's role in peace and security is indispensable. Yet peace processes mostly remain the domain of men. The number of women involved in peace and security, including in decision-making, remains very low. On the other hand, it is commonly recognized that the participation of women in security forces increases the effectiveness, credibility and the legitimacy of those institutions. One of the main obstacles to increased female participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions remains their underrepresentation in national armed forces and police services, in particular at senior levels and in operational roles. In that regard, we must all strengthen our efforts to increase the engagement and advancement of women in the security sector and its personnel.

Efficient, professional and accountable security forces are indispensable for protecting the basic safety of citizens, including women and girls. In that respect, Slovakia considers security sector reform to be a crucial instrument in transforming a security apparatus into a professional, transparent and accountable institution that is able to prevent, eliminate, investigate and punish sexual violence in armed conflicts. That is why we call for the effective implementation of resolution 2151 (2014), on security sector reform. Among other things, the resolution underscores the importance of the equal and effective participation and full involvement of women in all stages of the security sector reform. It also underlines the vital role of women in prevention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and in strengthening civilian protection measures in the security services during the reconstruction process. It also suggests including more women in training for security personnel, and calls for effective vetting processes in order to exclude perpetrators of sexual violence from the security sector.

Slovakia supports the full implementation of the *United Nations Security Sector Reform Integrated Technical Guidance Notes*, officially launched in December 2012. The guidance notes are focused, inter alia, on the inclusion of women's perspectives in security sector reform to ensure that United Nations-supported initiatives in that area respond to the different needs and capacities of women, girls, men and boys endangered by sexual violence.

The situation of refugees and internally displaced persons is a persistent challenge. Today, we face too many cases in too many regions where, due to various reasons, the armed forces and police are simply not able to provide basic security for citizens, including women and girls. That results in many cases in their forced exodus and the inevitable loss of their families and homes. Women should be highly represented in the security units of refugee camps and in decision-making and security positions, including police boards, security sector institutions and oversight bodies.

Ending impunity for crimes committed against displaced people, in particular women and girls, is a key priority. Greater support for justice reform initiatives is needed. That includes legislative development, specialized judicial training and building equal and timely access to justice. Initiating legal rights, awareness-raising and providing free or affordable legal services can improve access to justice for all who need it due to any kind of abuse, including gender-based abuse.

We fully support the commitment of the Secretary-General to the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. The numbers of substantiated allegations, despite the downward trend, still give us a cause for concern. Additional efforts are required to shorten the time needed to complete investigations and to ensure that investigations address allegations comprehensively.

Last but not least, we should not forget about the role and protection of women-led society groups, which play an important role in combating violent extremism in many countries. It is therefore essential to involve women's groups and female experts in decision-making in national, regional and international counter-terrorism initiatives. Ensuring the safety and protection of women human rights defenders, such as Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, needs to be prioritized by Member States and their security sector institutions.

To sum up, in many documents we have addressed many elements in terms of how to improve the situation. Let me mention six of them. First, with regard to the protection of women's rights, women and children are the main victims of rights violations in situations of violence and conflict. Secondly, on participation, we must encourage women to move into the public sphere and the security sector, to come forward and speak and to be active. Thirdly, with regard to inclusivity, resolution 1325 (2000) cannot be implemented without gender inclusivity in security sector reform, demobilization and reintegration. Fourthly, there must be transparency and accountability. Fifthly, justice and healing are critical issues for women. Impunity for crimes must not be allowed for anyone. The last element is financing gender equality. Resources and financing mechanisms should be considered for the increased participation of women in peace and security.

No women, no peace is affirmed by many practical examples. Many conflicts could have been prevented if women had been involved at the early stage. The year 2015 will mark our common endeavours to advance the agenda of women and peace and security with the adoption of the post-2015 sustainable development goals, as well as the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Let us therefore work together to mark those important benchmarks with concrete actions.