

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
28th of October, 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Secretary-General, Mr. Ban-ki Moon

Thank you, Madam President, Distinguished Members of the Council, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I commend Nigeria's choice of theme for today's debate, and I thank Madam President and Council members for understanding and agreeing to start earlier than usual to allow me to participate in this important meeting.

The Security Council has emphasized repeatedly that involving women in conflict prevention and mediation is essential for building peace and reinforcing the foundations of democracy. This understanding was further acknowledged by the award of this year's Nobel Peace Prize to three extraordinary women peacemakers: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee of Liberia; and Tawakkul Karman of Yemen. Their examples should inspire us to intensify our efforts to ensure women's full participation in all conflict prevention and resolution processes.

The Executive Director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet, will present my report on women, peace and security. As it indicates, women's participation remains low -- both in official and observer roles. This has to change, and I am determined that the UN system should lead by example. In the past year, the number of women leading UN peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions has gone up to 6 from 33 missions.

My Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and Sexual Violence in Conflict and my Special Representative on Violence against Children are all female too. The Department of Political Affairs has increased the proportion of women candidates in its roster of senior mediators, team members and thematic experts to 35 per cent. A gender and inclusion expert is now serving in the UN Standby Team of Mediation Experts, and guidance will soon be issued for UN mediators addressing conflict-related sexual violence in cease- fire and peace agreements.

In the field, our teams are supporting women so they can engage in peace building and conflict prevention, management and reconciliation in West Africa, Central Asia, the Balkans and Southeast Asia. In Afghanistan, our mission continues to engage with women networks struggling against the abuse of women. We have also worked for the inclusion of women in the High Peace Council and Provincial Peace Council.

In Darfur, our mission worked to ensure that more than 30 per cent of civil society representatives at the Doha peace negotiations were women. In South Sudan, UNMISS is working with women parliamentarians to enhance the role of women in conflict resolution, mitigation and peace building. In turn, I encourage Member States to increase the number of women in senior positions in international and regional conflict prevention. This means more women in senior governance roles, at the top of security institutions, and serving as diplomats. The next few months will see international meetings to support recovery in South Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan and Libya. Let us use these opportunities to ensure women's voices are heard. Excellencies, Distinguished Members of the Council,

As you know, I have presented a Strategic Framework to accelerate implementation of Security Council resolution 1325. It has targets and indicators for 2014 and 2020, and a baseline is being

assembled to track progress and ensure accountability. I will welcome further improvements in the flow of information to the Council on progress in the situation of women in armed conflict. I also urge Member States to do more – including through additional funding – to implement the Strategic Framework's priorities and protect the rights of women and girls.

While there is undoubtedly progress, I am deeply concerned about the persistence of serious abuses of women's rights. Last year at this time, I lamented the mass rapes that had occurred in Walikale, in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My alarm has not diminished.

We must respond swiftly and effectively to such crimes wherever and whenever they occur. We must hold those responsible to account.

Let us make women's dignity, safety and needs a priority. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am committed to working with the Council to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1325 and its related resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960. I look forward to hearing your proposals for bringing women from the margins of conflict prevention and mediation into the centre, where they belong. Thank you very much.