

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Elbahi, Permanent Mission of Sudan to the United Nations.

At the outset, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate in order to consider the issue of women and peace and security, which is one of the permanent items on our agenda. I should like also to thank the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bangura.

Aware of the need to highlight the role of women in peacetime, my Government has established a policy aimed at empowering women that is based on the following pillars: the environment, health, education, economic development, participation in decision-making processes, the settlement of disputes, and peace and human rights. A plan of action has been implemented with a view to implementing that policy. In addition, a number of administrative units responsible for women's affairs have been set up. Gender-specific measures have been promoted across all departments and ministries, including in the provinces, in order to establish plans of actions and strategies aimed at empowering women and strengthening their participation at all levels.

Projects have also been set up for the economic empowerment of women through the establishment of a women's portfolio, a revolving fund for women for the purpose of savings and economic development, and small-business projects that benefit women, set up by the Zakat department. I would also cite a project involving young graduates, the establishment of a group for working women, and other family-oriented undertakings. Empowerment programmes are focusing on rural women, particularly in Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile.

We have made considerable progress in terms of empowering women and strengthening their participation. For example, laws were enacted on equality of salary and retirement age. The electoral law of 2008 increased women's participation in Parliament; representation is now at 27 per cent. Women have been able to run for office and vote since laws to that effect were enacted in the 1950s and 1960s.

Women were included on the list of candidates for the presidential election. The participation of women in the public sector has increased significantly. In the Parliament, the rate is 28 per cent; in the private sector, 54 per cent; and in terms of economic production, 87.8 per cent. The Justice Department includes 80 women judges, and there are 50 women diplomats, including ambassadors and heads of missions to other countries. Women can join the security and armed forces and have reached grades as high as brigadier. They participate fully in the private sector and have made great strides in the public sector.

My Government has promoted such policies throughout all of the Sudanese provinces and regions, focusing on Darfur in particular. The projects are aimed at meeting the concerns of rural women first and foremost and include the financing of micro-projects aimed at alleviating poverty, training and capacity-building programmes, and awareness-raising programmes on health and nutrition, women's rights, education and peace education. The project allocates 30 per cent of its funding to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Furthermore, my Government has undertaken various projects at the central Government and regional levels. Those projects depend on the specific requirements of the area and are aimed at strengthening women's participation in peacetime.

A national strategy to eliminate violence against women was put in place in 2005. A unit on violence

against women and children has also been set up. Special law-enforcement agencies have been established to protect women and children, and women's rights are also protected within the army.

Genital mutilation was eliminated in 2008, and the criminal justice system has introduced provisions relating to war crimes so as to protect women from all forms of violence in Darfur; that was done in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the human rights office in the Sudan. We have also strengthened the World Health Organization protocol on the protection of victims of rape, making it possible to file a complaint and receive reparations. In 2010, a law criminalizing child abuse was enacted.

In that context, I would like to underscore that the Sudan's framework cooperation agreement with South Sudan will have a positive impact in promoting cooperation and assisting women in both countries, in addition to eliminating sexual violence in conflict. We should note that our disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes have, in coordination with specialized agencies of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women, given top priority to women. The aim is to implement a work plan pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000).

The solution to women's problems in times of armed conflict is inextricably linked to the efforts to analyse the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, lack of development and climate change, and to find solutions to them. Measures adopted by the Security Council must be based on reports of the Secretary-General grounded in accurate information received from reporting countries, not on reports from certain non-governmental organizations or the media.

We hope that the discussions in the Council will lead to the establishment of a system to examine all women's issues. In that context, I would like to underscore the importance of dialogue with countries concerned in order to analyse and find appropriate solutions to this very difficult topic.