

UN Security Council Presentation on UNSC Resolution 1325
Ms. Amy Smythe, Senior Gender Advisor, MONUC, 29 October 2003

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

I am grateful for the invitation to bring to you a field perspective on the implementation of Resolution 1325. It is not only an honor for MONUC, but indeed for all Gender Advisors mission- wide.

Before briefing you on the work of mainstreaming gender in the field, allow me to briefly summarize some of the key gender challenges in the DRC.

The International Rescue Committee estimates that up to 3.5 million people, mostly civilians, have perished in the past four and a half years of war. OCHA estimates that there are currently 3.4 million internally displaced persons in the DRC, and around 17 million people are food insecure. 41 percent of all children are undernourished. At least 1.3 million people are infected with the HIV virus whose prevalence among soldiers and irregular combatants is around 60 percent.

The consequences for women throughout the DRC have been devastating, as they have suffered the most. Some key features are:

- Internal displacement;
- Breakdown of almost every institution starting from the family;
- Inability to take care of crops or cultivate farms;
- Massive rape and sexual violence; and
- Complete impunity for perpetrators of these heinous crimes.

In essence, the law of the gun has devastated the condition of women.

It was in this context - of one of the world's greatest living tragedies - that the Gender Unit was set up in March 2002.

A small but very important office, staffed with a Senior Gender Advisor and her Deputy, two UN Volunteers, an administrative officer and two local officers, the unit had to adopt a two pronged strategy. The first prong was to integrate a gender perspective within MONUC itself. The second was to work with the Congolese population and society to bring the realities of the conflict as they especially affect women, to the attention of decision makers in the peace process and the Transition.

The Unit, together with other components of the Mission, has facilitated the implementation of MONUC's mandate through activities such as: training and research, communication and dissemination of gender sensitive information, outreach to the Congolese population, capacity building for women leaders, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation of women's participation in the peace and transition processes.

Mr. President,

Allow me to begin with the activities of disseminating information within MONUC, soon after the Gender Unit was set up. The first task was to sensitize Chiefs of Sections and Divisions on Resolution 1325, starting with the Office of the Special Representative. This was with the objective of seeking to win their personal commitment to listen to the Gender message and then take action. Once this was done with both military and civilian heads, the message was shared with colleagues in the agencies and the international community. The sensitization included distributing information on the mandate and scope of work of the Gender Unit and encouraging managers to initiate a two-way exchange of relevant information with the Unit.

Gender Training

The second task that was critical to the implementation of our mandate was the Gender sensitization training of Military Observers, CIVPOL and civilian personnel on their arrival at the mission, as well as with contingents when possible. The need to systematically train the contingents continues to be crucial because the military and CIVPOL live and work nearest to the communities in the conflict areas. Their behavior is therefore not only used to judge MONUC in many instances but becomes the yardstick emulated by the population and government. The staff of the Gender unit also provides gender training to the Congolese National Police. There have been sessions in Kisangani and Bunia which have resulted improved awareness by the police of the rights of women, as well as men, in society. Trainees deployed in Kindu are working closely with women's group on cases of violence against women.

Recruiting More Women Peace Keepers

Women have had an enhancing role especially in the work with victims of sexual violence, and as community bridge builders. Victims, usually female, have repeatedly intimated that the sight of a male officer in uniform makes them re-live the experience of the violation all over again. Thus there is a serious need for women Military and CIVPOL officers.

The pattern of recruitment of CIVPOL in MONUC is a major concern. Regrettably, instead of increasing the proportion of women to address the problems of violence against women, the proportion is steadily decreasing. Statistics show that before June 2003, out of 15 CIVPOL there was 1 woman. As of 9 June however, out of 69 officers there were 3 women. At present out of 90 CIVPOL there are still only 3 women. I would strongly urge police contributing countries to take prompt action in this area. The

expectation of the Gender office is that of the 182 CIVPOL that are to be recruited this year, at least 20 should be women.

The low percentage of women in the CIVPOL is equally reflected in the training of the Congolese National Police that has been carried out by the Gender office. Out of a total of 623 police trained so far, only 15 are women.

DDRRR

In the DDRRR program, our major challenge was to gain the understanding of DDRRR personnel that women's concerns were an integral part of all activities particularly demobilization. There are women commanders and combatants in the various militia. A package was also developed on Gender and vulnerable groups with the message that "behind every combatant there was usually a woman." A policy paper on Gender and DDRRR was circulated to the DDRRR Office with recommendations on the need to take women's concerns into consideration in policy conceptualization as well as implementation and monitoring.

During the setting up of the temporary reception center in Lubero as well as with the Kamina exercise, the Senior Gender Advisor and staff together with other female colleagues from Child Protection, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs served in technical committees and worked with colleagues in DDRRR. This strategic outreach was a breakthrough, combatants as well as dependants presented themselves for the DDRRR program, demonstrating the link between gender and DDRRR.

Peace Negotiations /The Inter-Congolese Dialogue

Mr. President,

The first major political activity on the inception of the Gender office was to support women in the Inter Congolese Dialogue in Sun City.

This was done by sensitizing them on Resolution 1325, which was translated into the four major languages used in the DRC. The strategy resulted in the formulation of a plan of action, the Nairobi Declaration, that was going to be used by Congolese women as their bargaining tool to allow them access to participate in the negotiations.

Following this, the Gender Office in collaboration with UNIFEM, held several training sessions with women in readiness for their participation in the Sun City negotiations where only a few women had been invited as delegates. Because of this poor representation of women delegates to the negotiations, it was decided that an alternative way of increasing the number would be to invite other women to participate as "experts". Thus, a total of 74, comprising 37 women delegates and 37 women experts, were able to work along side the majority 516 men, to bring the women's perspective to the negotiation process. It is widely accepted by both men and women that the participation of women at the ICD in the corridors, at commissions as well as in plenary, helped resolve and unravel difficult impasses during negotiations.

The outcome of the Sun City resolutions, especially the recommendations of the Humanitarian, Social and Cultural Commission reflect the voices of the women in the negotiations. In addition, the DRC Transitional Constitution took into account some of the women's concerns and the need to have them play a role in decision making as is evident in article 51 of the Transition Constitution.

Unfortunately the Constitutional provision is very vague and did not go far enough to reflect relevant international instruments such as the Beijing Platform for Action, that are very specific concerning women's representation in decision making. The reality is, in the transition period, so far only 7% of the representatives in Government, Parliament, Senate and Institutions supporting Democracy are women whilst 93% are men.

Mr. President,

We have also developed a network of partners including DYNAFEP, which represents women from all factions and political parties. They have been articulating the political views of women on the evolution of the transition process and working to increase women's involvement and participation in the elections, through press conferences and other media activities. Recently there was an assessment of the first 100 days of the Transition Government. The key issues of concern were identified as follows:

Ý Security: immediate and long term

Ý National unity and establishment of democratic governance throughout the DRC

Ý Sexual violence against women and impunity

Ý Women's representation in the Transition and elections

Ý Post conflict issues including the return of displaced and refugees, with special reference to women and girls

An important tool for monitoring women's involvement in the Peace Process and Transition has been a fortnightly forum of experience sharing facilitated by the Gender Unit with partners in civil society, including the media, MONUC personnel and government employees. Several key issues that have been discussed, reflect similar concerns raised by DYNAFEP.

Violence Against Women

Sexual violence is one of the major tragedies of the conflict. The police will have to play an important role in this area. In the eastern DRC, data being collected by MONUC, colleagues in the agencies and the local communities, reveal that tens, if not hundreds of thousands of girls and women are being raped as a result of the conflict. In the town Uvira in the Eastern DRC alone, it is believed from local sources that about 20% of

women and girls have been raped. A constitutional provision setting up legal mechanisms to document women's experiences and address impunity are now in place. However, expediting the processes will enhance healing for victims. It will also assure victims that in spite of the lack of rule of law in a place like Bunia justice will eventually prevail.

Mr. President,

The success of the Gender unit will be judged by the heritage we leave behind to the government and the people of the DRC to emulate. It is too early to make such claims after eighteen months. However, we are able to draw some key conclusions. Firstly, that the foundation has been laid for ensuring that the concerns of both men and women are reflected in the resolution of the conflict.

Secondly, networking within and outside the Mission and using creative means, is leading to attitudinal changes about women's role in establishing peace and greater understanding of gender mainstreaming. More of this will need to be seen in post conflict and reconstruction era.

Thirdly, though comprised of a small team of officers, the Gender Office, since March 2002 to date, has creatively use the limited human and material resources at its disposal to implement its mandate and that of the mission.

Priority Action Points / Recommendations

In conclusion Mr. President and members of the Security Council allow me to draw your attention to the following priority action points that have emerged from our experiences over the past 18 months:

1 SECURITY COUNCIL VISITS: The positive impact of field visits both psychologically and otherwise is tremendous. Missions to the field from HQ should see women, as much as they do men, listen to them and report back on their concerns, so that decisions and policies taken will reflect the realities and interests of both men and women in the conflict and post conflict situations.

2 APPROPRIATE STAFFING OF GENDER UNITS: If Gender Mainstreaming is to succeed in peacekeeping operations, It should start from the HQ level to the field. In this regard, the recently established Gender Adviser post in DPKO is welcomed. It is hoped that the person will receive adequate support to influence policy decisions at the highest level and support field missions.

At the same time, recruiting and adequately supporting Gender Advisers at a sufficiently high level in field missions, will enable them to influence decision making at all levels, so that effective use could be made of the mission's resources to the satisfaction of the population as well as other stakeholders.

3 FEMALE MILOBS AND CIVPOL: Troop and Police Contributing Countries should ensure that personnel recruited for Peacekeeping operations, including Civilian Police

and Military Observers consist of a substantial proportion of women. We have come to realize that it may be necessary to review the recruitment criteria in order to enable women to be identified for field missions.

Finally Mr. President and distinguished members of the Security Council, This Council should hold National Governments accountable for implementing gender related provisions in Peace Accords, as a guarantee for ensuring women's participation in all decision making arrangements. Above all, the all-pervasive cultures of impunity, including that for violence of all kinds against women, must come to an end.

I thank you for your attention.