

**Security Council discussion on  
Women, Peace and Security**

**Statement by**

**Ms. Angela E.V. King  
Assistant Secretary-General  
Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women**

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Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary-General  
Excellencies, Distinguished Members of the Council

I am honoured today to have the opportunity to speak on this historic occasion when for the first time the Council has decided to devote an entire Open Discussion to the topic “Women, peace and security.”

It has only been fairly recently that the experience of women and girls in armed conflict has been discussed, and that discussion has usually concentrated on their role as victims. Today’s debate will show that we have come a long way in a relatively short time. Your country’s strong leadership, Mr. President, in holding the landmark May meeting which marked this year’s tenth Anniversary of the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group, which resulted in the historic Windhoek Declaration and Namibian Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations, has won universal admiration among those fighting for women’s rights to participate in all aspects of the peace process. This, together with your distinguished chairing of the General Assembly’s twenty-third special session, Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace which immediately followed in June, constitute important steps along the way to considering the United Nations’ peace operations from the point of view of both women and men.

Other important developments have led to today’s meeting: the Council’s decision to take a thematic approach to its work, the recognition which the Council gave on International Women’s Day, 8 March, to women as actors in the peace process, the discussion on the situation of women in Afghanistan in April and the Council’s resolution 1314 of 11 August among others.

The timeliness of this discussion is also significant. The Secretary-General has just returned from an area where he undoubtedly had an opportunity to see at first hand the devastating effects of conflict on women and men, and the role they should play to bring about peace and rebuild societies in that arena. The discussion also coincides with the consideration of the Brahimi Panel's report on Peace Support Operations and the implementation of that report.

There are three broad areas to be considered in the context of today's discussion. How armed conflict affects women; how women actually respond to conflict, the peace process and post-conflict reconstruction; and how we can plan strategically for a future where women are equal partners with men in enhancing our effectiveness in peace operations.

Today, I would like to concentrate on the two latter points drawing on my experience as Chief of Mission in South Africa.

What do women actually do in conflict situations and how do they respond?

The Secretary-General has repeatedly emphasized the changing nature of war. He has noted that modern warfare is increasingly conducted within, rather than between States, and the Security Council is now called on to deal with such conflicts. He has stressed that more and more non-State actors are proponents in armed conflict, and even children have become involved. The proliferation of small arms and the ease with which they can be acquired, clearly shown in the DDA/DPI video documentary "Armed to the Teeth", has also added a new dimension.

The socio-economic fabric of a country has now to be the major focus of attention. Societal dynamics thus become a key guide to finding entry points into resolving disputes. Groups within each society and especially women's groups, non-governmental, religious or other groups have a major role to play, and whether these groups were formed before the conflict or organized during it, is unimportant. What is important, is that these groups must be part of all the stages of the peace negotiations, in planning for the future, in rebuilding and in crafting preventive strategies to avoid future conflict.

Often those of us who have seen the value of women's participation in peace operations at first hand are challenged by the sceptics to present empirical rather than anecdotal findings. In this connection, I am also pleased to report on the results of a joint three-year effort between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, my office and the Division for the Advancement of Women and with the generous funding of several Member States, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations*, which has just been finalized.

The study looks at five peace operations (Bosnia Herzegovina (UNMIBH), Cambodia (UNTAC), El Salvador (ONUSAL), Namibia (UNTAG) and South Africa (UNOMSA). It answers the sceptics by: giving objective and empirical findings on what women staff do in missions, whether and how they influence the outcomes and how their

participation equally with men, can improve the efficiency of UN peacekeeping. The Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action were informed by the findings of this study.

Exactly what does this study tell us? It shows unequivocally that:

- Where there is a critical mass of women in the mission (at least 30 per cent), local women are more easily mobilized to join peace committees. This occurred in South Africa and in Namibia where they actively promote voter education and the right of individual women to vote. In other words, women's participation in UN missions empowers local women and may inspire them to organize towards a democratic society in which they can exercise their rights equally with men;
- Women's participation has the capacity to expand the debate a little further, so that it may encompass more diverse subjects, including those which may be more relevant to what is happening to women, children and communities;
- Women are frequently less hierarchical in dealing with local communities and listen more, thereby having better insights into the root causes of conflict;
- Local women are more likely to confide in women peace-keepers about matters such as rape and other sexual violence (Bosnia Herzegovina);
- The presence of a critical mass of women appears to foster confidence and trust among the local population which is critical to successful operations (El Salvador, South Africa);
- Women are active negotiators and able to see more clearly issues where women are affected differently to men;
- Women's participation in all aspects of the mission helps to break down traditional views and stereotypes of women in local communities, especially when women peacekeepers serve in a broad spectrum of activities of the mission. This has a spin-off effect for the participation of local women in decision-making positions in the post conflict phase;
- Women political monitors or observers are just as willing and capable of serving in dangerous or isolated areas as men, and do so just as effectively;
- Mixed teams of women and men (Namibia), a significant proportion of women team leaders (South Africa), a woman Special Representative or Head of Mission or where the SRSG makes a conscious effort to seek the best staff, male or female --- influences the outcome positively (Namibia had 40 per cent women, South Africa 50 per cent women team leaders).

Women also respond by participating in the troop contributing countries military and civilian police contingents. DPKO has made strenuous efforts to encourage Member States to send women on missions as their presence can assist in diffusing potentially tense situations. Much more, Mr. President should be done in order to encourage women to enter this service. Gender-sensitive training is also needed for these and all other staff.

What does this and other studies tell us about what local women do?

There is abundant evidence to show that even when having to flee to safety with their families or protecting them in refugee or displaced person's camps, women take on a number of peace-building activities.

Women are active at both the formal and informal levels. With few exceptions, women are not present in formal peace negotiations. However, women have been part of these negotiations in Burundi, Guatemala and South Africa for example. Somali women helped to bring the clan leaders back into the negotiations at one stage and were permitted to join the negotiations as observers.

Most of the activities however, take place at the informal level. Grassroots women's organizations in several countries have sponsored peace education, encouraged child soldiers, boys *and* girls to lay down arms (Liberia), organized groups advocating peace across party and ethnic lines (Cyprus, Sri Lanka, former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland), organized campaigns against small arms (OAU/ECA African Women's Committee for Peace and Development), influenced repatriation processes and established services for returning exiles or refugees (Guatemala), contributed to the end of conflict (the Russian Mothers in Chechnya) negotiated hostage release, and counselled traumatized women and girls (Rwanda), and established legal support groups to get recognition for women's rights to land and household property which may have been in the name of a spouse killed or "disappeared" in the conflict (Burundi, Nicaragua, Rwanda).

Mr. President, women at the local level are a rich resource waiting to be systematically tapped by the international community.

Many aspects of these informal activities have been encouraged, supported financially and documented by the United Nations and its agencies, funds and programmes. In this connection, in addition to the work of the DPKO, Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA), special mention should be made of the work of UNHCR, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. UNDP, UNIFEM and UNCHS should also be credited with pioneering work at the national and grassroots level. Good practices have been identified, studied and published including the study by UNRISD, *Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction*, and the exchange of information on these practices has enabled the UN system to encourage States in rehabilitation to support and sustain women's groups and civil society engaged in these essential but often unrecognized activities. Capacity building for leadership and governance led by UNDP and UNIFEM has greatly facilitated women's ability to play constructive roles. Policies such as the policy on a "Gender

Perspective in humanitarian affairs” was promulgated in July last year by OCHA as an interagency effort.

These entities are all members of the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) which I chair and we have lately formed a Task Force on Women and Peace and Security to strengthen collaboration on this critical issue.

Mr. President, this brings me to our vision for the future.

The basic blueprint appears in the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action and in the many powerful statements from women’s groups that we heard yesterday in the Council’s Aria Formula meeting.

- The planning of any mission must include gender equality aspects;
- The mandate of the mission and the guidelines for SRSGs and Special Envoys must clearly indicate that gender considerations must be integrated into the missions’ goals and the head of mission should be responsible and accountable for ensuring that this is implemented;
- Each mission should have a plan for incorporating gender issues into all aspects of the mission’s work. There should be a gender unit, adequately staffed and resourced to provide the necessary backstopping on the mission site and one in DPKO for overall oversight. I am pleased to state that DPKO has established two such, in East Timor and Kosovo and a gender focal point in Sierra Leone;
- All sectors of the transition or rebuilding process should take gender issues into account;
- Greater attention must be paid to ensuring the appointment of women as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General or Special Envoys in accordance with the Brahimi report and the call by Women Heads of State and of Government of 5 September 2000. Suitable women should be hired at all levels and afforded opportunities to work in all fields to achieve qualitative and quantitative parity. More women need to be hired as political, human rights and humanitarian assistance officers, as well as civilian police and military personnel;
- The Council may wish to ensure that all reports that it receives on missions or its other activities contain information and data on the extent to which a gender perspective has been introduced cross sectorally throughout the mission’s work. Data should also be routinely requested on the level and number of women working in the various missions;
- Working with the agencies on the ground, the political and development wings of the mission should organize the mobilization of community groups,

especially women's groups at grassroots level to expand the pool of skills needed to sustain the peace process. A roster of such groups should be kept by DPKO in collaboration with regional bodies, agencies, funds and programmes. Women from these groups should be drawn upon as resources in fact-finding missions and fielded by the Secretariat and in other good office missions;

- The Code of Conduct for Peacekeepers should be regularly updated and related training should include both gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive modules. Where there are infringements of the Code of Conduct perpetrators should continue to be disciplined, clear guidelines should be implemented and gender-sensitive training given to personnel officers concerned, on related complaint and disciplinary measures and procedures;
- Should it be decided to appoint a new Assistant Secretary-General in DPKO as proposed in the Panel's report, strong consideration should be given to appointing a woman to one of the three ASG level posts in the Department.

Mr. President,

In closing, may I recall the main finding of the DPKO/DAW study that "the most important lesson learned is that lessons are not always learned". Lessons from Namibia and South Africa had little effect on Cambodia or Bosnia Herzegovina, for example.

Gender equality issues are absolutely essential to the success of any peace operation. We cannot exclude half the world's resources from participating in the peace process.

The fundamental human right to have and to enjoy equality is a given. It was emphasized by the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 and reaffirmed again in the Beijing+5 Outcome Document and in the Millennium Summit.

There can be no peace without gender equality and no development without both peace and equality. Without equal and fair participation of women in decision-making positions in the UN and also in Member States including in this central Organ of the United Nations, we will never achieve the vision outlined in the United Nations Charter.

Mr. President,

May this discussion be one in which we demonstrate that at least in the area of women, peace and security, this is one lesson that we have learned and intend to put into action.

I thank you, Mr. President.