

Keynote Address by

**Ms. Rachel Mayanja
Assistant Secretary-General and
Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women**

**10th Anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 – Ensuring Women’s
Participation in Peace and Security**

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The Honourable High Representative,
His Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Representatives of the European Union and the UN system,
Representatives of the NGO Community,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to share some perspectives with you on “Ensuring Women’s Participation in Peace and Security.” On the eve of the 10th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325, this focus is timely and highly relevant since all of us agree that the achievements in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) have fallen well below expectations.

Yet over the past ten years the international community has designed and implemented many initiatives and activities with a view to empowering women and girls in situations of armed conflict. Nineteen National Action Plans have been adopted and several more are in the pipeline. The United Nations system has devised and implemented a System-wide action plan which, for 2008-2009 alone, includes over 1000 activities. With specific reference to participation, a number of activities have focussed on capacity development to provide women with the tools and skills for participation in peace and security.

Civil Society has been actively engaged at the national levels and they have relentlessly drawn attention to challenges, especially to the exclusion of women from peace processes. They have had a strong presence at the international level too. A Civil Society Advisory group chaired by President Mary Robinson contributes actively to the discussions of the High Level Steering Committee which was established to guide the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). The United Nations system, Member States and civil society have all been actively engaged in the development of a set of indicators to guide the global implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

As a result of these and other efforts and strong activism, three of the 19 appointed Special and Personal Representatives, Envoys, and other High Level Appointments of the Secretary-General have been women. Women comprise 30 per cent of civilians deployed in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In 2007, Liberia welcomed the world's first all-female peacekeeping unit, contributed by India.

Excellencies and distinguished guests,

Despite some success and increasing momentum among all stakeholders, the participation of women in peace and security – an ultimate goal of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) – is at best nascent in most contexts. There are many examples of this exclusion.

In Aceh, Indonesia, women's grassroots efforts to organize peace efforts and promote reconciliation did not result in opportunities for formal participation in peace processes. Women were barely involved in the five-year dialogue and process that culminated in a memorandum of understanding in 2005, and the document contains no references to women and girls. In Nepal, women were excluded from the peace process that culminated in the signing of a 2006 peace accord. Although the peace agreement referenced the provision of special protection of women, their continued exclusion from the security sector has limited the implementation of these agreements. In Sudan's 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement, the role of women is given little attention despite the active involvement of various women's groups and activists in resolving armed conflict. As in Nepal, the 2006 Darfur Agreement called for the extension of protection to women, but this protection has not materialized. Throughout the Israeli/Palestinian peace process, women's representation as negotiators has been inadequate, despite government mandates on both sides requiring their inclusion. The list could go on and on.

Why do women continue to be excluded from peace and security matters despite the efforts of the international community and those of women themselves? What new approaches might begin to reap a significant, progressive and consistent improvement in ensuring women's participation?

Let me first offer some thoughts about why progress has been so slow.

First is the disruptive consequence of armed conflict, interfering with economic and social order, threatening the personal and collective safety and women and girls and restricting their availability and opportunities to participate in peace and security. In particular, large numbers of women and girls are the victims of sexual and gender-based violence during and after armed conflict. In many cases, women emerge from conflict as widows, forcing them to adapt to a new role as head of household and sole parent to their children. This has severe economic implications, and requires that women take on added domestic responsibilities and economic burdens, which may constrain their ability to engage in peace processes.

Second are the formidable institutional constraints to women's participation in peace and security. Peace and security institutions and processes have been traditionally made-dominated and there appears to be resistance or the absence of a mindset to incorporate women as actors. Women may not be accepted at the negotiating table simply because they are women; issues of war and peace may be considered the realm of men.

Third are the continuing demands on women to perform in traditional roles including caregiving. War and the injuries and losses that arise may increase this expectation. Even if they are invited to participate, women may not be able to afford to travel to peace conferences, which are often held abroad and may be sporadic and unpredictable. They may be unable to provide for their families while they are away.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now turn to possible approaches to ensuring women's participation in peace and security.

First and foremost, ensuring women's participation must be central to efforts to achieve sustainable peace and security. But it must be part of a comprehensive framework to implement resolution 1325 (2000). In order to achieve this, there is a need for a framework that focuses on concrete goals and that are achievable within a set timeframe. Fortunately there are examples of tested and proven frameworks such as the MDGs which have been extremely successful in galvanizing the global community towards the achievement of set goal. It is also possible to incorporate an effective accountability mechanism within such a framework. Such a mechanism serves as good practice example for the accelerating the implementation of resolution 1325.

The interplay among the three factors I have highlighted and others will continue to confound efforts to increase women's participation in peace and security unless a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach is adopted with specific time bound goals, targets and measurable indicators.

More fundamentally, changes are required in the traditional perception of women as caregivers and caretakers rather than peacemakers. Investments are required in the educational sector to address and uproot prevailing stereotypes that lead to the exclusion of women from peacebuilding process. Security sector reform must be a cornerstone of this approach.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) provides a powerful new institutional framework for beginning to tackle the issues of women, peace and security in a more multi-sectoral, comprehensive and concerted manner. When it is fully operational early next year, UN Women will encompass the mandates and functions of the four current UN offices working for the

advancement of women. Bringing together the normative and operational experiences and perspectives will facilitate a more holistic approach to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). UN Women should draw strength from its diverse origins and spearhead a comprehensive approach to improving women's visibility and influence in areas of conflict and post-conflict. It will also serve to bring the perspectives of other UN entities into the work on peace and security.

A major challenge to progress in implementation has been the lack of an evidence base to inform our understanding of what works and what does not work to ensure women's participation in matters of peace and security. We may have made more progress than we can acknowledge, but we simply do not have the evidence to demonstrate these changes. Similarly we may be using approaches that are a set back to progress. The urgency of a comprehensive evidence base cannot be over-emphasized. The development and population of a set of indicators for use on the global level would be valuable in meeting this need. UN Women can contribute to this effort.

UN Women alone will not be able to resolve the challenges of women, peace, and security. Closer cooperation between UN Women and other UN entities, especially UN Country Teams, would open the door to new opportunities for addressing the complex of factors that constrain participation – whether they are health, education, employment or others. The creation of UN Women also offers an opportunity to demand attention and resources for addressing the needs of women and girls.

Recognizing the challenges and the potential of UN women to lead a more comprehensive approach to addressing women's participation in peace and security, I would recommend that work on women, peace and security within UN Women be clearly set within the context of the broader mandate of gender mainstreaming, gender equality and women's empowerment. This would be consistent with the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The obstacles to women's participation in peace and security can only be addressed effectively if the broader human rights of women and girls are recognized.

Let me conclude, Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, by affirming that there will be no lasting peace without women's participation. Similarly, there will be no meaningful participation of women without women's empowerment.

Thank you for your attention.