

Remarks
by
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at the
High Level Panel on Women, Peace and Security
UNHQ, NLB Conference Room 2
28 September 2010

His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Côte d'Ivoire,
Her Excellency the Minister of Family, Woman and Social Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to participate in this "High Level Panel on Women, Peace and Security." I commend the Permanent Mission of Côte d'Ivoire for sponsoring this panel, which is very timely in view of the increased focus in recent months on how to ensure more measurable sustained progress in implementing resolution 1325 (2000).

When it was adopted on 31 October 2000, resolution 1325 (2000) was recognized as a landmark resolution. It was the first Security Council resolution to address women's issues in the international peace and security agenda. The resolution sought to ensure women's full and active participation in conflict resolution, peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction; and it also sought to protect women and girls from violence, particularly sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Resolution 1325 (2000) noted the absence of women's voice in nearly all peace processes and recognized that this absence was to the detriment of both men and women in the affected societies. It affirmed that women were an integral part of peace and security.

In response to the resolution, Member States, the United Nations system, civil society and other actors have carried out multiple activities with a view to implementing the resolution. Nineteen countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, have adopted National Action Plans to guide their efforts to implement resolution 1325(2000). Member States have also worked to ensure that resolution 1325(2000) remains at the forefront of our minds, including through high-level meetings such as the one that brings us together today. UN entities have organized thousands of activities aimed at implementing the resolution.

Civil society has played an important role, drawing our attention to the situation on the ground, to the persistent obstacles and to the need for enhanced great commitment from all. They have also implemented activities to directly support women peace makers in conflict situations. The fact that we are here this afternoon is a testament to our commitment to ensuring that women achieve full and equal

participation in all matters of peace and security. It is promising to see so many partners in this endeavour present for this panel, and I am hopeful that we will have an opportunity to learn from one another about what we have achieved, how we have achieved it, and how we can overcome the challenges.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In view of the multiple activities that have been undertaken and the clear commitment of many actors, one may ask: what has held us back from concrete achievements? What accounts for the persistent and epidemic violations of women's rights in contexts of armed conflicts?

Allow me to share five key messages on this issue.

First, armed conflict means chaos; we must develop bold strategies to overcome this chaos. It is important to recognize that conflict, by definition, is marked by a breakdown of order. In this context, strong political will, international pressure, concerted action to arrest and prosecute perpetrators and, in some cases, the imposition of sanctions might be required to halt the flagrant abuse of women and girls in situations of armed conflict.

Second, clear goals and targets must be identified. Although multiple activities have been implemented, intermediate goals have sometimes supplanted the ultimate vision and goals of resolution 1325 (2000). It is important to remain focused on ensuring participation, prevention, protection and relief and recovery as outlined in the resolution. These goals must be pursued through a cohesive implementation framework. A coherent and cohesive approach and accountability mechanisms to monitor progress are also needed.

Third, the root causes of conflict must be addressed. It is important to recognize that the immediate precipitator of violence against women in armed conflict is the occurrence of conflict itself. Efforts must be intensified to address the root causes of armed conflict. As His Excellency the President of Côte d'Ivoire noted at the opening of the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly last year, there is a link between peace and security and poverty. Only by addressing the root causes of conflict, including redressing unequal access to resources can long-term peace for all be assured. This link between poverty and peace and security is especially relevant at this time, as the UN system evaluates its progress toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Fourth, dedicated resources are required. The work on implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) is constrained by a lack of adequate human and financial resources. As a result, work on women, peace and security remains fragmented, without clear and dedicated budgets. This threatens the continuity of interventions that work and constrains efforts to establish a strong empirical basis for new strategies. It is especially important for resources to be found to support the work of civil society at the grassroots level.

Finally, gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all sectors of development is a prerequisite to ensuring a place for women in peace and security. The blatant

disregard for the rights of women and girls in situations of armed conflict that leads to atrocities such as we have seen in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reflect our failure at ensuring gender mainstreaming at all levels of our societies. In too many contexts, women are still viewed as second class citizens -- too often considered to be without decision making authority even in the home.

Only if the contributions of women as well as men are given due cognizance in all sectors; only if women earn equal wages for equal work; only if girls and boys have equal access to education; only if women and men have an equal opportunity to contribute to the political discourse; only if the blatant discrimination against women and girls even in times of peace is halted would we have established the foundation for the full respect of women and girls and for their full engagement during armed conflict and its aftermath.

Thank you for your attention.