

As delivered

Statement  
by  
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at  
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Troop and Police Contributing Countries  
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Madam Chairperson,  
Distinguished Panelists,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am truly delighted to be here today and to be given the opportunity to discuss with you the role of women's constituencies in advancing the role of women in peace operations, a topic that is central to the work of my Office and to the peace and security agenda of the United Nations. I would like to thank the organizers, DPKO, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes and the Government of South Africa, for inviting me to this important strategy workshop and to commend them on the excellent arrangements made to bring all of us together to discuss these critical issues.

This workshop builds on the outcomes of the Policy Dialogue with troop- and police- contributing countries organized by DPKO in March 2006. During that first meeting, we agreed that the deployment of female peacekeepers has "become not just desirable, but an operational imperative and that their enhanced recruitment is possible." Today, however, I will not bore you by repeating what many of us have come to acknowledge and accept that women in uniform are role models for many young women. Neither will I reiterate that in conflict situations where women have been subjected to abuse, gender-based violence including sexual violence by militias in some sort of uniform, they do not trust any man in uniform. Nor shall I underline once again the important role that women in uniform play in reaching out to women and children who have been traumatized especially by armed men in uniform. Since we have all acknowledged that women are making important contributions to the successful implementation of complex, multidimensional peacekeeping mandates, the increase in their numbers would be an obvious logical next step. And yet, there has been thus far very little systematic action to increase their numbers and their deployment in peacekeeping operations.

Our mandate for the next three days therefore is to explore opportunities for enhancing the role of government representatives responsible for gender and women's affairs (popularly known as national machineries for women) as well as women's constituencies to:

- influence and inform national policy formulation processes guiding participation in peacekeeping operations;
- support increased recruitment of women into the military and police services; and
- support the design and delivery of gender-sensitive pre-deployment training to prospective peacekeepers.

We are fortunate to have among us practitioners and policy makers with extensive experience and expertise in these areas. I look forward to what promises to be a very exciting and rich interactive dialogue. I encourage all participants to fully engage in these conversations and share with us your experiences especially how your country has managed to successfully take advantage of the national machineries for women and the wider women's constituencies.

As I look around the room I recognize many faces. We have been on this long journey together and have made stops at same places. We have learnt and indeed discovered a lot on the way. Among them the international commitments contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, all of which recognize the critical role of women in peace processes and prohibit discrimination against women.

How can the national machineries for women contribute to the enhancement of this role? The Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action, adopted by the first UN World Conference on Women in 1975, was the first international instrument to introduce the concept of national machineries for the advancement of women and called for their establishment. The term national machinery for the advancement of women referred to the mechanisms established by governments to promote and support the achievement of gender equality in their countries, including through the implementation of the commitments made at the global processes. The first national machineries started to appear in the 1970s and 1980s. At the present time, a total of 186 countries have established national machineries. Importantly, all TCC/PCC have such an established mechanism. In addition, new institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment have been created at both the national and regional levels, such as equality commissions, committees, councils, advisory groups, ombudspersons for gender equality, parliamentary caucuses and gender focal points in governmental offices and in-line ministries.

The Platform for Action adopted in Beijing in 1995 introduced a new and important element into the work of national machineries - the strategy of gender mainstreaming. This new strategy sought to ensure the incorporation of a gender perspective into all areas of development, security and peace. It was envisaged that these

machineries would be the central policy coordinating bodies for the mainstreaming of a gender perspective.

Regrettably, from their inception to the present, national machineries for women have encountered significant challenges that have diminished their effectiveness. These include inadequate financial and human resources, a lack of political will and commitment of the political leadership, exclusion from critical policy-making bodies and competing government priorities. The situation is further exacerbated by insufficient understanding of the terms gender equality and gender mainstreaming as well as prevailing gender stereotypes, discriminatory attitudes, insufficient applied methods for assessing progress and limited links to civil society. Ensuring accountability where there are multiple actors responsible for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment remains a key challenge.

A serious constraint to national machineries' assumption of a leadership role in gender mainstreaming is their frequent restructuring, change of leadership, location shifts and insufficient human and financial resources. They impede their attempts to fulfill the role of a coordinating body for mainstreaming a gender perspective into national policies and programmes. They often do not have capacities to establish horizontal links with relevant line ministries, including the ministries of defense and interior, as well as vertical links with municipal, district, regional and provincial government structures. This problem of coordination became more serious with the establishment of new national gender equality mechanisms, as often there is no synergy in the work of such mechanisms.

The success of the mainstreaming process is directly linked to the implementation of SCR1325. The resolution fundamentally changed the image of women from being seen exclusively as victims of war to being recognized as active participants -- as peacemakers, peace-builders and negotiators. As such women must be included in peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding, says the UN Security Council through its resolution 1325. And as we know Security Council resolutions are binding on each and every member state of the United Nations. Unfortunately, national machineries in many countries have not yet included the implementation of resolution 1325 into their mandates and thus the resolution remains largely unknown including in the ministries of defence and interior.

Another challenge is successful collaboration with civil society. In some countries, national machineries have built effective alliances with civil society and the women's movements, thereby creating a successful strategy of inside-outside advocacy in order to advance the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment. But in some other countries, there has been a tendency to ignore NGO actors and to deny civil society access to government policy processes. This competitive attitude and lack of collaboration has had detrimental effects on the work of both the national machineries and civil society.

The challenges facing national machineries for women are similar to those experienced by my office. As Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, my functions are primarily to advocate, coordinate and assist in the implementation of policies on gender equality in all U.N. programmes and policies, as well as to provide advice and strategies for the improvement of the status of women within the United Nations. Additionally, I am also tasked with and dedicated to promoting a working environment that offers equal opportunities for career advancement to both women and men. My office, as an international machinery for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, is also struggling with many mandates and scarce human and financial resources.

To overcome these constraints, it is imperative that my office forges partnerships both within the UN system and with women's constituencies. I have found these collaborative initiatives extremely valuable as they have indeed enabled my office to extend beyond the possibility of my very limited resources. Through such joint ventures much has been achieved. In addition I have found boldness to act, to explore another valuable asset. By venturing where others do not expect to find me I have been able to reach out and advocate for women's involvement. Likewise, the national machineries for women need to be creative, to reach out to others and to forge partnerships.

We have among us representatives of national machineries for women. I would be interested to learn how you work with women's constituencies, with the ministries of defense and interior. Some have suggested that national machineries are simply too passive to champion the rights of women to participate in the police and military services. Others have gone as far as asserting that national machineries are not up to the task when it comes to women's involvement in TCC/PCC and in peacekeeping generally. National women's machineries are totally absent from the peacekeeping, peace-making, peace-building and conflict prevention. What are the reasons for the deference to the ministries of defense and interior? Why have national machineries for women failed to establish a meaningful collaborative relationship with these two ministries? Why have they not assumed a leadership role in this area? We need answers in order to design effective strategies to address the underlying causes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A friend of mine shared with me her experience as the head of the Corrections Department in her country. She recalled how she had encouraged women to apply for positions as Corrections Officers. The first woman to be hired was resented by her male colleagues to such an extent that one time they put grass in her sandwich and even locked her up in one of the cells. My friend realized that the only way she could protect her was by bringing on board more women. Male officers had to get used to the reality that women can function as correction officers. There is indeed truth in the saying that there is strength in numbers.

I also recall when I was in one peacekeeping mission, I discussed with police officers the problem of gender-based violence, in particular rape in the mission area. I impressed upon them the importance of their intervention as police officers to protect

women and girls against these crimes. One of them asked me why they should intervene? Was this not the role of NGOs?

I also met with representatives of civil society in one of our peacekeeping mission to understand from their side

These two examples demonstrate quite clearly the importance on one hand of increasing the numbers of women in the uniformed services and on the other the importance of partnerships. However, in order to ensure a good working partnership there is a need to clarify the practical implications of partnerships and the distinct roles of each party. Underlying any successful partnership is trust. How often do we read of NGO workers being attacked or expelled from the country! I hope that through our discussions this week we will also focus on these issues.

Despite these challenges, some countries have taken actions to strengthen national machineries for women and few gains have been achieved. The following are some examples of good practices as they apply to the armed forces:

(a) Enhanced authority and upgrades in status national machineries for women, including movement to central areas of government;

(b) Enhanced active catalytic role by sensitizing different sectoral ministries and agencies to address gender concerns in their policies and programmes.

- In Burkina Faso, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has been working with the Ministry of Defense to introduce the 50/50 distribution in acceptance to military schools;
- In Italy, an Advisory Committee was established in 2004 to integrate women into the armed forces: it includes representatives of the Ministries of Defense, Equal Opportunities and Economy and Finance.
- In Belgium, the Department of Defense actively participates in a joint working group together with other federal public services and the Belgian Institute for Equality of Women and Men to develop an action gender mainstreaming plan.
- In Jordan, the Directorate of Military Women's Affairs which works with other gender focused entities was established in 1995;

(c) Many countries have enacted gender equality laws and legal reforms encompassing equal opportunities in the work place and prohibition of sexual discrimination and sexual harassment

- In France, national legislation provides for equal opportunities for service in the armed forces and police, training, deployment, career development and promotion;
- In Belgium, the Military Service Law provides for an optional 4 day working week, flexible working hours and 15 week maternity leave.

(d) National gender equality policies, action plans and national strategies have been adopted.

- Canada promulgated a new Employment Equality Plan to ensure that women are accorded equal opportunity to join Canadian Forces
- In Jordan, in 2005, a 10-year strategy was established for enhancing the role of women with a long term goal to expand women's recruitment, open new command positions, and improve the quality of service and work.

(e) established focal points in line ministries which play a key role in gender mainstreaming efforts; networks of such focal points have been set up in some countries, facilitated by the national machinery;

(g) improved data collection, development of indicators and support for gender-related research;

(h) setting up of new mechanisms for promoting gender equality to hold governments accountable, in addition to machinery within government, including standing committees on gender equality in parliaments, caucuses of women parliamentarians, committees or commissions with joint government-civil society membership and partnered with a wide variety of organizations including trade unions and professional bodies.

(i) national campaigns to raise public awareness about issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

- In Canada, the National Recruitment Attraction Plan provides strategic guidance to ensure that the Canadian Force includes women. Recruiting staff establish partnerships with a variety civil organizations such as the Canadian Interuniversity Sports; recruiters participate in women focused shows and seminars;

(k) Strategies have been adopted to present positive images of women in the mass media in some cases with the support of NGOs and civil society:

(l) Gender sensitive budgeting has been also introduced in many countries.

Six years after the adoption of 1325 (2000), only a handful of governments, mostly from developed countries, have shown a concrete commitment to the implementation of 1325 by developing national action plans for its implementation. Only a few are adjusting training modules for military personnel, especially those sent to peacekeeping missions. Few are altering their development aid packages to post conflict countries. A small number are instructing senior representatives to address gender issues, encourage women's representation and reach out to women in conflict and post-conflict zones.

We cannot accept that six years after the adoption of resolution 1325, out of 80 countries contributing to UN police forces, less than 30 deployed women. Nor are we satisfied with just one per cent women among our military personnel.

Joining forces with national machineries for women, line ministries, including Ministries of Defense and Interior, and civil society will maximize respective advantages for the quest for increase of women in the troop and police components of the peacekeeping operations. Collaboration between the national mechanisms and women's NGOs is important for launching a successful awareness-raising campaign, dissemination and promotion of the importance of the implementation of SC resolution 1325 at the national level in countries emerging from conflict or in post-conflict situations. It is also a basis for strengthening national capacities, including through training for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women in all areas.

A strengthened partnership between national machineries and women's NGOs to promote improved collaboration with the military/police sectors of the government would allow national women's constituencies to assist military and police institutions in the formulation of gender-sensitive recruitment policies. They could also contribute towards monitoring of conditions of service for women in the military and police positions. In time such efforts would also positively impact on policies for the deployment of police and military in UN peacekeeping operations.

My message today is that we can greatly improve women's representation in peacekeeping operations. To do so, national machineries for women need to work with other ministries, including ministries of defense and interior; civil society and the United Nations to remove remaining barriers that prevent qualified women from joining peacekeeping operations, attaining their fullest potential and enjoying a long and rewarding career in the armed and police forces.

To reach this goal I would like to suggest the following strategies:

1. The implementation of a package of actions that would include enacting legislation, adoption of policies and programmes and pilot projects for the recruitment of women in the uniformed services.
2. Capacity development through training of government officials and other relevant actors to support gender-sensitive policy formulation and implementation.
3. Allocation of adequate personnel and budgetary resources to national machineries to implement their activities;
4. Innovative special incentives (such as special recognition of Governments for providing gender balanced contingents, monetary and career incentives for women peacekeepers or earmarked seed funds to sectoral ministries) to encourage further actions;
5. Establishment of targets, development of appropriate monitoring tools and regular tracking of progress;
6. Regular meeting by DPKO with partners inside and outside government, to assess progress, identify gaps and devise collaborative strategies to address obstacles;

7. Mobilization of political will through public awareness programmes, media and broad dissemination of information;
8. Development and dissemination of national action plans on resolution 1325 (2000).

So, for the days that you are here, I would like to invite you to take advantage of your colleagues' experiences, listen to the expert presentations, and challenge yourself to find solutions to problems your countries are encountering in mobilizing women's constituencies for the implementation of resolution 1325.

Through your work here, you can all come away with new ideas, innovative solutions, and useful recommendations that can result in establishing fruitful collaboration between women's constituencies and military/police institutions, identification of incentives for enhanced women's recruitment in your armed and police forces and as a consequence in their deployment to UN peacekeeping operations. But what is by far most important is action. We need to act on these ideas to create and implement solutions.

In closing I would like to remind you all that if we make visible progress on this issue we can and will positively impact the lives of millions of women, girls, men and boys across the world. By effectively addressing the needs and priorities of both sexes, and empowering women to take up their rightful place in communities being supported by UN peacekeepers, we can enhance the transition from turmoil and conflict to sustainable peace and development. My Office stands ready to assist in advancing the outcomes of this meeting.

Thank you.

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