

52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Interactive dialogue: “Women’s equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building”

Friday, 29 February 2008, 10 am-1 pm

Moderator’s Summary

1. On 28 February 2008, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue to evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on “Women’s equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building” adopted by the Commission at its forty-eighth session in 2004. The interactive dialogue was designed to strengthen the role of the Commission in following up on the implementation, at the national, regional and international levels, of agreed actions on this priority theme. The dialogue was opened by two keynote speakers: Ms. Carolyn McAskie, Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, and Ms. Gina Torry, Coordinator, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. The Chairperson of the Commission, H.E. Mr. Olivier Belle, moderated the meeting. An issues paper provided the framework for the discussion.

Progress made in implementation

2. Participants confirmed that attention to gender equality issues and women’s full and effective participation in peace processes and peacebuilding was crucial in the promotion of gender equality, as well as in ensuring the sustainable and effective reconstruction of political, social, economic and legal structures in countries emerging from conflict. Peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts were windows of opportunity for accelerating the elimination of discrimination and violence against women.

3. Participants noted that some progress had been made in implementing the agreed conclusions, and underscored the pivotal role of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. They welcomed the establishment, in 2006, of the Peacebuilding Commission, an advisory body mandated to integrate the United Nations capacities in peacebuilding, human rights, rule of law, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development, which also has a specific mandate to address gender equality.

4. Participants reported *successful strategies to increase women’s participation* in peace processes. With the support of the international community, women had participated in peace talks, and women had been appointed as members of newly established bodies at the national level, such as National Steering Committees responsible for working with the Peacebuilding Commission. Progress had also been made in facilitating meetings of women on opposite sides of conflicts, with the aim of building

bridges between conflicting communities. Regional alliances had been formed aimed at increasing the participation of women in peace processes.

5. Participants confirmed their commitment to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325, and some countries who were members of the Security Council gave priority attention to gender equality issues in conflict and the participation of women in peace processes. Participants provided examples of *national action plans* that had been adopted to give effect to this resolution. In many instances, these plans had been developed with the involvement of different ministries and governmental entities, as well as civil society and women's groups, to enhance their effectiveness and impact.

6. As part of the follow-up to the agreed conclusions, steps had been taken to *raise awareness* of the critical role of women in peace processes and of Security Council resolution 1325, including through national and regional seminars and workshops. In some countries, First Ladies had taken a leadership role in peace initiatives, the promotion of a culture of peace, and in support of women's active and effective participation in such initiatives.

7. *Capacity building* efforts aimed at empowering women and building their capacity and technical skills to effectively participate in peace processes, including peace negotiations, had been implemented. Initiatives included the establishment of training centres, the preparation of training manuals and the development of training of trainers' programmes.

8. Some progress had also been made in improving *data collection* and building the knowledge base on gender equality and peacebuilding issues, including monitoring and reporting on women's participation in peace processes. An example of an initiative to develop indicators on women in armed conflict was presented, and research on women's participation in peace processes was discussed.

9. Participants reported on efforts made to increase the number of *women in peacekeeping and security forces*, including the deployment of women in United Nations peace operations. Increases in the number of women in the security sector had also led to the recognition of the need to reform these traditionally male dominated institutions to address gender equality concerns. In one case, an oversight mechanism had been established to monitor the situation of women in military careers, and workshops had been held to increase awareness of gender equality issues.

10. Efforts had also been made to address *sexual violence in armed conflict*. Some participants reported on initiatives to train the police and security forces on gender equality issues and violence against women, and on the establishment of services for women victims of violence in armed conflict. These initiatives, in addition to meeting the specific goals on violence against women, contributed to the creation of an enabling environment to enhance women's participation in peace processes.

11. Participants also highlighted efforts aimed at the *prevention of conflict*, including through the education system and youth fora.

12. Entities of the United Nations system, such as UNIFEM, had expanded their support for enhancing women's participation in peace processes. These included measures to build women's capacity to participate in decision-making in countries in, or emerging from, conflict. Gender units or gender advisors had been established in a number of peace operations.

Gaps and challenges in implementation, and steps to be taken

13. Despite progress made since the adoption of the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (2004) and of Security Council resolution 1325, participants noted a continuing under-representation of women in peace negotiations and processes. There was also a lack of systematic interaction between peace negotiators/mediators and women's organizations and networks. In addition, the continuing resistance to interaction between experts on security issues and gender equality issues remained a challenge.

14. Participants called for effective measures to *increase the number of women in decision-making positions* in government delegations, entities of the United Nations, and especially those having operational functions in peacekeeping, and in regional organizations.

15. Efforts were also needed to ensure consistent attention to *gender equality issues in the work of all intergovernmental bodies* dealing with peace and security issues, and especially the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Security Council members should request that all reports by the Secretary-General to the Council reflect attention to gender equality issues, including violence against women, and Member States should include gender equality experts in country and thematic discussions. Participants suggested that a partnership be developed between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women. They encouraged the Peacebuilding Commission to continue to address gender equality issues in all its current and future country configurations.

16. Participants suggested that all Member States should develop *national action plans* for the implementation of resolution 1325 to enhance accountability, strengthen women's participation in peace processes and raise awareness. Such plans should be developed with a participatory approach, involving different Government ministries and offices, including foreign affairs, defense and women's affairs, and seek input from civil society organizations. Participants stressed the need to include benchmarks and timelines, as well as to allocate resources for the implementation of such plans, to enhance monitoring and accountability. Entities of the United Nations system should provide technical support and cooperation for the development and implementation of national action plans.

17. Participants supported the Secretary-General's call on the Security Council to establish a *monitoring mechanism* for the implementation of resolution 1325, to strengthen accountability for women's full participation in all processes related to peace and security and to address violence against women in armed conflict.

18. Participants called for intensified efforts to *integrate gender perspectives at every stage of conflict resolution and peacebuilding*, including resource mobilization and allocation, human resources development, research and data collection, communication strategies, knowledge management, capacity-building, and monitoring and evaluation efforts at local, national and international levels. Gender equality issues should be mainstreamed into all guidance notes and protocols for early warning, negotiations and drafting of peace agreements, as well as in post-conflict assessments and reconstruction efforts. Relevant departments of the Secretariat, such as DPA and DPKO, should be mandated to address gender equality issues from the outset of processes. The terms of reference of high-level missions, including assessment missions, should include a requirement for consultations with women's groups and networks.

19. There was a need for *stronger United Nations capacity on gender equality* to support the participation of women in peace processes, to integrate gender perspectives in such processes, and to better support the role of women in the resolution of conflicts. There was also a need for enhanced gender equality and gender mainstreaming expertise in relevant departments of the Secretariat.

20. More secure funding was needed for gender equality issues in post-conflict reconstruction, including for institution-building, legal reform, women's economic empowerment and basic services, and to bridge the gap between reconstruction interventions and development cooperation. Participants called for *increased resources* to strengthen women's participation in peace processes and peacebuilding, including increased core budgets, innovative funding measures and adequate funding for gender equality expertise, including in relevant departments of the Secretariat.

21. Participants called for increased technical and financial support for *women's organizations and networks* to increase the participation of women in peace processes, and to ensure consolidated inputs to such processes.

22. Enhanced efforts were necessary to prevent and respond to *sexual violence in armed conflict*, on the part of the United Nations and police and troop contributing countries. This should include a strengthening of mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations staff and related personnel, including systematic training on gender equality issues and violence against women. In this respect, participants suggested enhanced training for all peacekeeping contingents on violence against women; and integration of violence against women programmes in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. Participants called for strengthened efforts at the national and international levels to address sexual violence in armed conflict as a threat to peace and security.