

**Third Committee
Interactive Dialogue
“Women in the peace building process”
New York, Tuesday 11 October 2005**

**Statement by Nadine Puechguirbal
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Thank you Mr. Chairman.

The work of the Gender Unit takes place within the framework of Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security which is reaffirmed in the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH, in its Resolution 1542 (2004).

Overall Goal:

- To ensure that all aspects of the mission’s mandate incorporates a gender perspective and the full participation and advancement of women through awareness raising and capacity building of MINUSTAH and external actors.

What does this concretely mean within the framework of our activities as regards women in the peace building process? I think that it’s very important to see women as actors in the peace building process and also as agents of change for peace and not only as powerless victims in need of protection or passive beneficiaries.

This means

- To focus on three substantive areas of work, such as:
 - 1. Ensuring the participation of women in the political spheres and in all aspects of the electoral process, as candidates and voters;**
 - 2. Ensuring a sustainable Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process targeting the reduction of violence for women in affected communities;**
 - 3. Contributing to an enhanced prevention and response programme to gender-based violence, including sexual violence;**

Since I don’t have time to elaborate on the three subjects, I’ll focus on the participation of women in the political process within the context of the upcoming elections in Haiti. But if some of you are interested in topics such as DDR and violence against women, I’ll be happy to see you after the panel.

The only available figures demonstrate that in 1999, Haitian women represented only 3.5 % of elected women as Members of Parliament, 0% as Senators, and 4.5% as mayors¹. In addition, women only occupied 14% of Governmental posts. It must be noted that none of these positions were prominent. Haitian women represent 52% of the population but since they have been excluded from electoral processes in the past, we needed to bridge the gender gap and provide them with the same opportunities as men. By highlighting women as a primary target group based on an understanding of gender roles and social relationships within Haiti, we illustrated the meaning of a gender perspective and demonstrated the importance of focusing on the needs of women. Very few women have been elected in the past. Consequently, women who are currently seeking office, lack experience, expertise, required skills and competencies in the political arena.

As a result, our empowerment strategy focused upon training sessions on Women and Leadership for groups of women candidates for the upcoming elections, in partnership with women's organizations. The training was framed around participants needs, and included topics such as Conflict Resolution, Communication, Planning and Organization and Presentation Skills. Following the training sessions, a group of women candidates created the "Réseau des Femmes Candidates pour Gagner" (Network of Women Candidates for Winning the Elections) with the aim of bringing together women beyond their political affiliation – thereby creating a network of female candidates which transcends politics. **This is a great achievement in a very competitive political environment.** The Network's weekly TV and radio broadcasting activities are currently supported by MINUSTAH in order to promote the involvement of women as candidates, make their daily work visible and demonstrate to the general public what women can achieve in the political realm.

Women in Haiti want to bring a new perspective into politics; we are supporting them so that the ongoing peace building process in Haiti is all inclusive and does not marginalize 52% of the population. This is challenging not only because of traditional and cultural obstacles that need to be overcome, but also because of the current volatile security situation that jeopardizes women's daily activities and exposes them to increased violence.

I would like to say a few words on the Peace building Commission to conclude

Looking at the situation of Haiti, peace building processes are very fragile and can be upset by recurring violence that could result in the re-militarization of a post-conflict society. One of the major challenges in peace building is to ensure that women will be safe in their own communities, will have political space, access to and control over resources and will be included at all levels of decision-making in peace processes in order to ensure that their own perspectives are taken into consideration.

¹ However, the Parliament was dissolved in the years following the 2000 elections that were mired with fraud.

With the creation of the PBC, we have a new hope that women's perspectives will be included in peace building strategies, in general and in context-specific situations. I understand that the PBC will provide a forum in which major stakeholders can share information about comprehensive post-conflict recovery efforts that take into account political, security, development and economic spheres.... it is imperative that women, whether they are at the international, regional or national levels, are considered as major stakeholders.

It is therefore suggested that a full-time gender advisor be assigned to the PBC to advise on the integration of a gender perspective into its work.

Once again, worldwide experiences and practices demonstrate that there can not be a sustainable peace without the full involvement of women as major actors in peace building processes.

Thank you for your attention.