

**Statement of Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo,
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs,
to the Third Committee Interactive Debate on
“Women in the peacebuilding process**

New York, 11 October 2005

Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Bureau of the Third Committee for taking the initiative to hold this interactive debate on “Women in the peacebuilding process”.

This discussion is extremely relevant and timely, given the recent reaffirmation by the World Summit of three important principles:

- First, that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing;
- Second, that gender equality is essential to advance development and peace and security; and
- Third, that women play an important role in preventing and resolving conflicts and in building peace.

No doubt, everyone in this room subscribes to these principles. What Governments, United Nations entities and civil society need to explore further is the type of policies and practices required to ensure that gender perspectives are fully taken into account—and that women play a greater role in peace and security. This is particularly important in peacebuilding, an area unmistakably marked by linkages between peace and security, development, and human rights.

Given its aim—to prevent the outbreak, recurrence or continuation of armed conflict—peacebuilding encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights mechanisms and programmes. It requires short and long-term actions tailored to address the particular needs of societies sliding into conflict or emerging from it. And it focuses on fostering sustainable institutions and processes, in areas such as: eradicating poverty and inequalities; building transparent and accountable governance; promoting democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law; and fostering a culture of peace and non-violence.

Our emphasis on gender perspectives and the role of women in peacebuilding should match the broad scope of action involved. Most importantly, we must challenge the notion that gender perspectives and “women’s issues” need only be addressed post-

conflict. They must be addressed from the outset and across the board in social and economic development strategies.

We know that medium-term relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction, and long-term development are not consecutive or isolated phases. Rather, they are overlapping and constituent elements of the complex peacebuilding process. And this requires Governments, United Nations entities and other actors to adopt a more integrated and harmonized approach.

In conflict and its aftermath, women experience specific inequalities and discrimination. To address these challenges, attention to the needs, contributions and priorities of women must be an integral element of all peacebuilding strategies. Moreover, the changing nature of conflict has brought to the forefront the important proactive role played by women in peace and security: as partners in mediating and negotiating peace, in searching for justice, in fostering reconciliation, in supporting disarmament and demobilization, and in shaping policies and rebuilding institutions.

The World Summit gave strong recognition to this, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action, its tenth-year review, and the groundbreaking Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security (2000). Member States and the United Nations have committed to work actively towards the integration of gender perspectives in their work in this area. To make this happen, we must plan and execute policies and programmes accordingly.

The World Summit also decided on the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission. Effective functioning of the proposed Commission and its support office will depend on efforts made to ensure the incorporation of gender perspectives from the initial stages. This means providing for adequate consultation with and participation of women in setting up the Commission and in all areas of its subsequent work. Attention will need to be given to gender perspectives in relation to institutional structures, policy development, funding and activities.

The development of the policies and practices of the Peacebuilding Commission should take into account existing global norms and standards on gender equality and empowerment of women. The Commission and its support office must have sufficient capacity in this regard. The work of the Commission and its support office could build on the policies, strategies, action plans, guidelines, tools and good practices already developed by many United Nations entities.

Women's groups and networks must be consulted and given the opportunity to participate in the policy and decision-making of the Peacebuilding Commission, including through involvement in needs assessments, in provision of information and situation-analysis, in country-specific activities, and in monitoring processes. This will ensure that the Commission's work draws and builds on the efforts of civil society to facilitate women's peacebuilding activities.

The Commission can also draw on the efforts of the Economic and Social Council to integrate conflict prevention and peacebuilding, through its Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on Countries Emerging from Conflicts and its participation in the Framework Team on Conflict Prevention.

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our success in including gender perspectives in UN peacebuilding efforts will constitute an important indicator of the overall success of UN reform and enhanced cooperation among the different actors of the UN system. It will also generate immeasurable momentum, not merely for reform efforts system-wide, but mainly for advancing enduring progress on the ground, in the communities that we serve.