

Women in the peacebuilding process
Interactive debate of the Third Committee
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Statement by
Ms. Rachel Mayanja
Assistant Secretary-General
Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues
and Advancement of Women

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and friends,

I warmly congratulate you, Mr Chairperson, and the members of the Bureau, for focusing the first interactive debate in this Committee on the critical topic of “Women and peace-building”. The debate this morning comes at a time when preparations are underway for the commemoration in the Security Council later this month of the 5th anniversary of the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

I would like through my brief intervention to offer some insights on women and peacebuilding to stimulate further discussion in this interactive debate.

I recently returned from a mission to Sudan where I witnessed the devastating effects of protracted war on communities, women, men, girls and boys. Displacement, poverty as well as suffering and trauma caused by the immense violence will only be addressed through sustainable peace. I met women in Darfur describing the harsh every-day life in the IDP camps; women in southern Sudan seeking to catch up for more than two decades of loss of development; women setting up self-help groups, income-generating schemes, reconciliation and education initiatives. I met women leaders such as Awut Deng Acuil and Helen Oller, who are members of the Southern Sudan Constitutional Drafting Committee. They talked to me about the work they do to ensure that women's rights are protected and promoted in the Constitution, including the right to participate in public life and to be represented in executive and legislative organs; the right to property and inheritance, to equal pay for equal work; to equal access to health and education services; and the need to enact laws to combat harmful customs and traditions which undermine the dignity and status of women.

Meeting these women reaffirmed my strong belief that our joint peacebuilding efforts will fail unless our work is guided by a commitment to equality and non-discrimination and unless women are supported as full and equal partners in building sustainable peace and rebuilding their communities after conflict.

But they are not the only ones – women from the Balkans, Ireland, Afghanistan, Nepal, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala and many other conflict areas have pursued peace in different ways.

During the last year, important contributions have been made to our common understanding of the linkages between peace and security, development and human rights by the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, the Secretary-General's report "In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all", and the recent World Summit Outcome.

While the recent focus on the interrelationship between development and peace is fairly new, we need to remind ourselves that the linkages between gender equality, development and peace have been the guiding themes of the four World Conferences on Women from Mexico City in 1975 to Beijing in 1995 as well as its follow-up meetings in 2000 and earlier this year. There is a growing understanding that women's exclusion from the political process creates a democratic deficit. Societies that marginalize women and prevent their participation in public life tend to have more authoritarian voices and a heightened risk of instability. It is therefore critical that we include gender equality in the equation between peace, development and human rights.

Security Council resolution 1325 and the Security Council open debates on women, peace and security since 2000 have focused on women's crucial role in all areas of promoting and sustaining peace. The Inter-agency Taskforce on Women, Peace and Security, which I chair, promotes and facilitates full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325. Representatives from many entities in the United Nations system participate actively in the Taskforce. As will be indicated in a system-wide Action Plan that was mandated by a Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2004/40) last year, 37 UN entities are actively involved in peace-building.

Let me give you just a few examples of strategies and actions taken by UN entities:

- DPA and DPKO are developing comprehensive departmental gender mainstreaming action plans to integrate gender perspectives into their respective mandates and programmes related to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacekeeping.
- The Interagency Standing Committee is issuing, through its Taskforce on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance, a set of "Guidelines for gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian emergencies" with a focus on prevention and response to sexual violence. These guidelines will be field-tested and will contribute a major tool to strengthen system-wide response to gender-based violence. They are available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic and training initiatives are planned on the use of the guidelines.
- The World Food Programme has issued a Gender Policy with Enhanced Commitments to Women to Ensure Food Security. These Commitments are to mitigate social violence by addressing asymmetries in power relations between women and men and by shifting the entitlement of food rations to women.
- A number of UN entities are building partnerships with and support national and local women's organizations, including through capacity-building, and training to ensure women's full participation in all stages of the peace process.

However, full recognition of the contribution of women to peacebuilding is lacking. Despite the recognition of women like Wangari Matthai (2004), or other Nobel Peace Laureates such as Jody Williams and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (1997), Aung San Suu Kyi (1991) or Mother Teresa (1979), there has not been adequate recognition of the contributions women have made to durable peace, including the contributions of those less prominent at the international level, but very effective at the local and regional levels

The decision to establish a Peacebuilding Commission has clearly illustrated the commitment of Member States to identify new ways to promote and build peace and security. A particular challenge faced is to ensure that the establishment of the Commission and the development of its agenda are undertaken in a gender-sensitive manner, recognizing the critical role that women play, so that the different experiences, needs and priorities of women and men are specifically addressed.

In many different contexts, a broad range of stakeholders are now giving increased attention to the gender perspectives of peacebuilding and will be following closely the work of the United Nations in establishing this important Commission. As one example, in the context of the 2005 World Summit the women Foreign Ministers of 14 countries identified some of the key gender equality issues to be addressed in the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which could also be usefully discussed here in this debate, particularly since the composition and working methods of the Commission are currently being developed at this session of the General Assembly.

Let me emphasize a number of these priority issues relating to the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission:

- *Equal representation of women and men*, in keeping with the mandates of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Gender balance should be a key principle in the establishment of the Commission itself and its Organizing Committee. This will require that Member States specifically nominate women as participants in the preparatory process as well as in the Commission.
- *Commitment to gender mainstreaming* in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. Gender equality perspectives must be explicitly taken into consideration in the development of working approaches and methods. The challenges facing gender mainstreaming in all areas of the work of the United Nations should be taken into consideration in the establishment of the Commission, to ensure that good practices are built on and identified failings and weaknesses are avoided.
- *Consultation with women's groups and networks*. Identifying the gender equality perspectives in peacebuilding, and ensuring that the work of the United Nations builds on and enhances the existing efforts of women, requires adequate consultation with women's groups and networks throughout the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. Effective mechanisms must be set up to facilitate such consultation and to ensure that women are reached and involved.
- *Adequate attention to institutional arrangements, including funding*. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission will require the establishment of specific gender equality expertise in the Commission and its support office. Adequate funding for human resources and for the development of methodologies and tools, including for training, and monitoring and reporting, must be secured from the outset.

Ultimately, we will only succeed in making peacebuilding processes sustainable if we are willing to see peace and security issues in a comprehensive way that addresses the needs of both women and men in economic and social development, in sound governance, in legal reform processes based on equality and non-discrimination. Peacebuilding activities will require both targeted programs to end women's marginalization as well as mainstreaming gender to ensure a comprehensive

transformation of war-torn societies into non-violent and productive communities willing to engage in the long process of reconciliation and rebuilding.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to hearing the inputs of all participants at this interactive debate.
