

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict- Affected Situations, October 18th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Menan, Permanent Mission of Togo to the United Nations

I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened today's debate on women and peace and security, with a focus on the rule of law and transitional justice in situations of armed conflicts. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his very constructive introductory statement. I also thank the other speakers — Ms. Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights; Ms. Mlambo- Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director; and Ms. Balipou, representing civil society — for their statements, which have made meaningful contributions to our debate.

The adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1325 (2000) and its subsequent resolutions demonstrates the Council's continuous concern at the violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations. An assessment of the implementation of those resolutions shows that, while they have contributed to promoting gender equality in prevention, participation, protection, peacebuilding and restoring the rule of law, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General before us today (S/2013/525), much remains to be done. The goal of the United Nations in those resolutions is essentially that of freeing women and girls from acts of violence of all kinds and giving them the place that they deserve in society — a goal that has yet to be reached.

The events unfolding in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the Central African Republic — as Ms. Balipou mentioned — in Syria and elsewhere around the world, where women continue to be the special target of violence committed by men, show that there is still a long way to go to protect women in situations of armed conflict. Togo nonetheless welcomes the fact that the United Nations, through its peacekeeping operations, has made the protection of civilians an essential element in the mandates of peace missions. The deployment on the ground of gender advisers arises from that determination to help the victims and guide them to the appropriate support services. My country would like to see the deployment of such advisers mainstreamed throughout all missions, with the staffing and resources that they need.

As we all know, violence against women will not end until those who commit and order it are found, arrested, tried and sentenced. The fight against impunity cannot be a matter of mere words; it must see be a commitment by all political actors and parties in a crisis to work to eradicate the culture of violence against women and girls, especially rape, which has for some time been a weapon of war.

This issue is at the centre of the majority of Security Council debates, but we are still far from a solution. The United Nations must stress the fight against violence by supporting, through appropriate mechanisms, the Governments of countries in conflict situations or emerging therefrom to address the issues of violence and impunity. We believe that restoring judicial institutions and providing them with more human and financial resources could contribute to deterring serious violations of human rights and to effectively punishing their perpetrators. The adoption of national laws to repress such acts is also necessary. Truth, justice and reconciliation commissions, which have had a positive impact in such processes, must serve as a framework for justice for all — justice that establishes truth and repairs the damage.

It goes without saying that the fight against impunity can be waged only in the context of a rule of law that establishes effective transitional justice and promotes the effective participation of victims, including women, in the country's reconstruction. Unfortunately, with regard to participation, the fact is that women have played a minor role, if they have not been totally sidelined, in peace talks and reconciliation and in political and economic activities. As an illustration, in 2012 women comprised fewer than 8 per cent of the members of negotiating delegations in peace processes.

The Secretary-General's report also indicates that in the context of economic recovery and access to resources during and after conflict, women have also played a very limited role. My country believes that women should enjoy, in peacetime and in conflict situations, all economic and social rights, inheritance and property rights, and access to basic services, especially in areas of health and education.

However, we acknowledge the efforts of some countries that have integrated gender issues into their national legislation by setting a quota for women in elected positions and high-level decision-making, as is the case in

such post-conflict countries as Timor- Leste, Afghanistan, Liberia, Haiti and the Democratic

Republic of the Congo. Rwanda, of course, sets the most progressive example in that respect. Togo encourages the United Nations to assist countries that have not yet done so to integrate into their national systems the experience of those who have managed to increase the role of women in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction.

Women will not be protected in any lasting way until in-depth legal and judicial reforms are undertaken by countries emerging from armed conflict. Fortunately, a number of countries have undertaken reforms in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other relevant international legal instruments. Clearly, the best way to protect women and fight effectively against the effects of armed conflict on the lives of people in conflict is to take measures to prevent the outbreak of conflicts.

My delegation welcomes the fact that resolution 2122 (2013), which was adopted earlier today, focuses on various aspects of the fight against violence against women. We hope that it will have a positive impact on the ground, in particular through its implementation by all countries.