

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

Statement by Ambassador Samantha Power, Permanent Mission of United States of America to the United Nations

Mr. President, I welcome the chance to participate in this debate on issues that are central to the mission of the United Nations and to the future of us all. I thank the Secretary General for his most recent report, for his presence here today, and for the personal commitment he has made to women, peace and security. I also thank Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for her testimony and for her tremendous leadership of UN Women, we know the best is still ahead and we're delighted to have you in this role. I thank High Commissioner Pilyay who has spent her whole career pressing this agenda with significant returns.

And of course Madame Balipou, not only for her remarks and for undertaking an arduous journey to be with us here today, but for advocating with such eloquence on behalf of women's participation, and on behalf of the rule of law, which go very much together, in the Central African Republic and beyond, what you do takes courage, and we commend you for it.

Security Council resolution 1325 was a landmark measure. It affirmed the principle that women's participation in conflict prevention, mitigation, and recovery is vital to the maintenance of international security and peace. Not a sideshow, but vital.

This reality is, in turn, linked to achievement of all eight of the UN's Millennium Development Goals, whether directly – as in women's empowerment – or as a logical consequence – as in the areas of universal education, maternal health, child mortality, and environmental protection. Progress towards one of these essential goals will make gains easier in the others – and all are connected to women's participation in peace and security.

Today's debate, as we know, focuses on one particular aspect of this linkage, which is the rule of law. That focus is appropriate because the law is diminished in any country where half of the population is denied the chance to shape it.

Years ago, I bore witness as a journalist to the brutal violence in the Balkans. There, mass rape was used as a tactic of war and the means of accountability had to be created through the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia – but it was created only after tens of thousands of people had already died. We've learned through hard experience that wars are increasingly carried out less by professional troops than by irregular forces – leading to more civilian casualties, economic disruption, and displaced families. During the chaos of armed conflict; legal systems are often bypassed and sexual predators, we found, do their worst.

In the wake of such suffering, we understand that inadequate governance and limited resources may complicate the task of recovery and healing. There is, however, one standard we can live up to regardless of the situation -- and that is the principle of inclusion; whether a country is rich or poor, there is no excuse for denying women fair representation when negotiating the terms of the peace, when enacting laws or in forging a conflict free future. And here, the United Nations should be a standard setter and, according to the Secretary General's September report, some important progress is being made.

This past year, as we've heard, women were included in every formal peace negotiating process led or co-led by the UN. Gender experts were present in eighty-five percent of delegations and, in each case, representatives of women's civil society groups were consulted. Women are playing a more prominent role in crisis prevention, most notably in Darfur and the Great Lakes Region. Since 2009, gender crimes investigators have been a part of all UN commissions of inquiry. And again as was said, this year 3 out of 10 peace agreements in UN supported processes included provisions for women's political participation or protection. That is more than the year before. Analysis of women and security is now included in most reports by peacekeeping and special political missions. And the Secretary General has established – and my government and other governments vigorously support – the policy of zero tolerance toward sexual-related abuses committed by UN personnel, something that still happens with alarming incidence.

Less impressive, however, is the level of women's participation in police and military deployments. The figures of ten percent and three percent respectively remain well below the modest target of twenty percent that had been set for next year. Just as disappointing, only four of the twenty seven peace-related field

missions are led by women.

Moreover, we have all deplored the horrific sexual crimes being carried out daily in Syria where rape has again become a routine weapon of war. And this Council is just back from Eastern Congo where we met with IDPs, peacekeepers, and civil society, who described a near pandemic of sexual violence associated with the conflict there.

Clearly, the involvement of women in peace and security is a goal that must be approached from many directions simultaneously. And that's why the United States encourages every country to develop an action plan.

My government announced its own blueprint two years ago after broad consultations with civil society. The plan lays out a comprehensive strategy for incorporating women in efforts to prevent conflict, provide humanitarian protection, foster food security, and ensure fair treatment under the law.

This plan is backed by leaders across the U.S. government. President Obama is personally determined to change the DNA of the U.S. government so that this inexorable link between women's inclusion and lasting peace is a premise or an axiom brought to every policy discussion. President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry have ordered its full integration into our diplomacy; the Defense Department is spreading the message of gender awareness to partners across the globe; our Justice Department is working with police, prosecutors, and judges to increase accountability for sexual violence; and the Centers for Disease Control have launched a system for monitoring abuse against women and girls.

As the Secretary General's report acknowledges, there remain troubling gaps in what we know about women and security, but one thing we've learned is that there is a correlation between gender inequity and the potential for civil strife. Consider, for example, the Central African Republic, which ranks 138th out of 146 on the UNDP's gender inequality index. Even before the recent explosion in violence, teen pregnancy was out of control and the rate of unhealthy births and maternal deaths was far too high. The situation is now a catastrophe as rebels have replaced law with anarchy and as we've heard a quarter million people have been driven from their homes. The depth of this crisis underlines the importance of Ms. Balipou's presence here today; it is vital that her message of inclusion be heeded.

My colleagues, the Secretary General's report reminds us that the implementation of Resolution 1325 must go forward with both the short and long term in mind. Our ultimate goal is a transformation in how people everywhere think about security; our daily focus is on the incremental changes that will lead us in the right direction.

Because of UN Women and its partners, numerous productive initiatives are underway. These range from peace building efforts by women in Mali to new legal protection measures in Colombia to smoother access to justice in Haiti to the enhanced role for women in the police of Zimbabwe. Women are also playing an important part in preparing for elections in Sierra Leone and in harnessing new communications technology to monitor and report on violations in Sudan and other areas of conflict.

There is cumulative power in the new voices being heard, and when opportunities arise, some civil society leaders are making the leap from outside advocacy to positions of political power.

We've seen in Kenya civil society deeply engaged in a five year campaign – endorsed by the UN – to enshrine the rights of women to own land, live equally in marriage, and be free from the threat of violence. And on Election Day this past spring, a record eighty-seven women were chosen for parliament, a number that – pursuant to the country's new constitution – will increase further in the years ahead.

And we commend Rwanda which now has 62% of its parliamentarians are women, a remarkable statistic.

We know, as well, that what begins as a single voice can sometimes become a mighty chorus. And like many of you, I recently had the honor of meeting Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani with the soft smile and the steel spine as well as the powerful message of inclusion. Whether discussing the right of a girl to sit in a classroom or the right of a woman to lead her country in the quest for security and peace, the principle is the same and the dividend for peace, for dignity, and for prosperity of women's inclusion, that dividend is obvious.

At least since the approval of Resolution 1325 thirteen years ago, the international community has agreed on the direction that we want to move. As we continue to go forward, let us confront honestly the

obstacles that remain before us. Let's create a spin-free zone on 1325 and its implementation, and let's not conflate effort with results. They are different. Let us instead take concrete steps so that women share fully in efforts to avoid and contain conflict, just as they inevitably share in the suffering when such efforts are poorly designed or when they fail.

Make no mistake, the engagement of women in peace and security does not reflect a desire for disengagement by men. The principle that guides us is respect for the rights and dignity of all. And to end and recover from strife, we seek the leadership and participation of each gender and every nationality. Just as all benefit from peace, so all must help to create peace.

Thank you, Mr. President.