

Security Council calls for boost to women's role in peace and security

23 October 2007 – Recognizing the recent progress towards including women in the search for peace, justice and reconciliation, the Security Council today urged countries and the United Nations system to enhance female participation in decision-making and to take specific steps to protect women and girls from gender-based violence during conflicts.

In a presidential statement adopted at the end of a day-long open meeting, the Council noted the “constant underrepresentation of women in formal peace processes,” and called for enhancing their role in matters related to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

The 15-member body also expressed deep concern that gender-based violence, particularly rape, remain “pervasive, and in some situations have become systematic,” despite calls for the protection of women and girls.

Opening today's [meeting](#), which heard from some 60 speakers, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [said](#) “there is so much left to do – both for the United Nations and for Member States,” to implement the provisions of resolution 1325 – the landmark document adopted by the Council in 2000 which stresses the importance of giving women equal participation and full involvement in peace and security matters and the need to increase their role in decision-making.

Mr. Ban also stressed the need to appoint more women in leadership positions in UN peace operations, and recalled the recent appointment of Ambassador Ellen Margrethe Løj of Denmark to serve as his Special Representative for Liberia. As head of one of the UN's biggest peacekeeping missions, “she will provide a shining example of the kind of qualities we need in our leaders in the field,” he said.

Underscoring the vital need to address violence against women, which he said had reached “hideous and pandemic proportions” in some societies attempting to recover from conflict, the Secretary-General urged the Council to establish a mechanism dedicated to monitoring violence against women and girls.

A vital tool in eliminating sexual violence is the UN's political leadership, through the Secretary-General's Special Representatives on the ground, as well as the key role played by UN missions in providing preventive, physical protection, for example, through their daily patrols, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations told the Council.

“Though this protective role cannot be overstated where it protects even one person, we cannot overlook the reality that we are not present in all locations in need of protection,” stated Jean-Marie Guéhenno, pointing out that the deployment of UN troops alone will not bring an end to rape and other forms of sexual violence and abuses.

To address discrimination against women, he stressed that no effort must be spared in putting more women in senior level positions and operational roles in military and policing so as to encourage local women to take on similar roles and ensure the development of a national protection system once the mission leaves.

He said it was an “encouraging sign” that the Liberian National Police received three times the usual number of female applicants in the month following the deployment of the all-female police contingent from India to the UN mission in that country (UNMIL) earlier this year.

“More women in the police force must be accompanied by a strategy to improve policing as a service equally accessible to women,” Mr. Guéhenno stated. “This in turn requires laws that incorporate women’s rights and a judicial system accessible to victims of sexual violence.”

Despite the Council’s repeated condemnation of gender-based violence, and its demands to all parties to conflict to cease such actions, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women pointed out that sexual violence remains pervasive.

“We are at a moment in history when the world should finally be ready to alter the course of human development and renounce all forms of violence by decisively accepting the responsibility to stamp it out,” said Rachel Mayanja.

“Today this Council can help accelerate this shift by establishing a dedicated mechanism to monitor the situation of women and girls in conflict and hold parties to conflicts accountable for sexual and gender-based violence,” she stated, echoing the call made by the Secretary-General.

She urged all governments, parliaments, international organizations and civil society to join a worldwide campaign on violence against women and girls to be launched by Mr. Ban later this year, saying that “only by acting together can we create more equal relationships and more peaceful societies.”

Joanne Sandler, acting Executive Director of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), told the Council that using resolution 1325 to meaningfully address sexual violence as a method of warfare is “our greatest collective challenge.”

“The real measure of effective implementation is not the setting up of systems, plans and processes,” she said. The measure is women’s participation in and contribution to more sustainable peace agreements and post-conflict reconstruction strategies, and better protection of women and girls in conflict zones.

“The measure is women and men being secure enough to bring cases of wartime atrocities against women and girls to transitional justice mechanisms,” she said, adding “we have a long way to go.”