

Women must play full part in peace-building, Security Council declares



Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

5 October 2009 – The Security Council today unanimously urged all countries and international bodies to take further steps to ensure full participation of women in all stages of conflict resolution and peace-building, with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calling it “a top priority for the United Nations.”

The 15-member body voiced deep concern about the under-representation of women at all stages of peace processes, particularly the very low numbers in formal roles in mediation processes, nearly nine years after it passed an earlier resolution calling for increased female representation at all decision-making levels in preventing, managing and resolving conflict.

“A growing body of evidence suggests that bringing women to the peace table improves the quality of agreements reached, and increases the chances of successful implementation,” Mr. Ban told the Council in a **message** to a day-long open session on Women, Peace and Security delivered by Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro.

“Women are likely to put gender issues on the agenda, set different priorities and possibly bridge the political divide more effectively. Experience also suggests that women's contributions in post-conflict situations can make a critical difference to community survival and reconstruction.”

He noted that in nine years since the adoption of the earlier resolution, only 16 countries had adopted National Action Plans for its implementation, and he called on all Member States to take action before the 10th anniversary.

Today's resolution likewise highlighted deep concern at the violence and intimidation, lack of security and lack of rule of law, cultural discrimination and stigmatization, including the rise

of extremist or fanatical views on women, all of which hinder full female involvement in conflict resolution.

It reiterated the call for all parties in armed conflicts to immediately cease all violations of international law regarding the rights and protection of women and girls and emphasized the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and prosecute those responsible for all forms of violence, including rape and other sexual violence.

"Women face appalling violence – especially sexual violence – in the anarchy generated by conflict and its aftermath," Mr. Ban said in his statement. "Yet post-conflict gender-based violence often remains below the radar screen, since a cessation of conflict is often mistaken for the full return of peace."

The Council called on Mr. Ban to develop a strategy, including through appropriate training, to increase the number of women appointed to pursue good offices on his behalf, and to submit within six months a set of indicators to track implementation of the resolution. It also said it intended to include provisions on promoting gender equality when establishing or renewing UN peacekeeping missions.

And it encouraged Member States to address such female needs and priorities as greater physical security, better socio-economic conditions through education, income generating activities, access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health, and access to justice.

Presenting Mr. Ban most recent report on the issue, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women Rachel Mayanja warned that it was not enough simply to adopt National Action Plans - these plans must be implemented to achieve their goals and be backed by resources. "The Council must be relentless in its insistence on women as peacekeepers, peace builders and decision-makers," she said.

UN Development Fund for Women (**UNIFEM**) Ines Alberdi noted that women average less than 10 per cent of members of official negotiating teams at peace talks. "Their striking absence at this stage means they lack voice in everything that follows," she said.

"In post-conflict planning, women must participate in needs assessments, priority-setting and monitoring public expenditure. Civil society groups representing women's interests must be invited to donor conferences," she added, stressing that economic recovery usually means job creation for young men, often at the expense of adequate investment in women's employment and livelihood needs.

"Securing women's land and property rights must be a major focus of recovery efforts and should be addressed in peace negotiations," she declared.

Over 50 Member States were scheduled to speak during the debate.

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