



Embassy of the Republic of Namibia to Ethiopia, AU and UNECA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. ANNE NAMAKAU MUTELO,
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA TO ETHIOPIA,
AU AND UNECA
AT THE PSC OPEN SESSION ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S
VULNERABILITY IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS**

ADDIS ABABA

4 DECEMBER 2013

Your Excellency Ambassador of The Gambia and Chair of the PSC for December

Your Excellencies Members of the PSC

Your Excellencies Distinguished Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Her Excellency Anne Namakau Mutelo, Ambassador of the Republic of Namibia to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Ambassador Mutelo would have loved to be here with us all today but due to other commitments she cannot make it. She sends her warm regards and thanks for the invitation extended to her to participate in this Open Session and wants to assure you that she is here in spirit. I now wish to read Ambassador Mutelo's statement and I quote:

“ I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to you and to the Peace and Security Council for the invitation extended to me to take part in this open session on such an important subject. It is estimated that close to 90 per cent of current war casualties are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children, compared to a century ago when 90 per cent of those who lost their lives were military personnel.

Although entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex. Parties in conflict situations often rape women, sometimes using systematic rape as a tactic of war. Other forms of violence against women committed in armed conflict include murder, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and forced sterilization.

Mr. Chairperson

It was in recognition of the plight and vulnerability of women and children in armed conflict that Namibia initiated the idea of coming up with a resolution that would sensitise the international community towards their suffering and put mechanisms in place to alleviate such suffering.

The United Nations Charter not only committed its members to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, it also unequivocally reaffirmed fundamental human rights and the equal rights of men and women. Despite this strong commitment, the understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding developed slowly within the United Nations.

It took several decades to develop a strong normative framework and strengthened operational policies and procedures and make the UN system increasingly responsive to the needs and priorities of women and girls in countries in conflict.

Early efforts to address the situation of women in armed conflict include the consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1969 whether special protection should be accorded to women and children during armed conflict and emergency situations. In 1974, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict.

Building on this early work on women in conflict, the four United Nations World Conferences on Women focused on the linkages between gender equality, development and peace: Mexico in 1975; Copenhagen in 1980; Nairobi in 1985; and Beijing in 1995. Over the years, the focus of the discussions on women and peace shifted from overall political issues to the impact of war on women and girls and their role in peacebuilding.

Mr. Chairperson

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, identified women and armed conflict as one of 12 critical areas of concern. Since the Beijing Conference there have been important developments at the international level in the treatment of crimes committed against women in situations of armed conflict.

In 2000, the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" reaffirmed the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The outcome document called for the full participation of women at all levels of decision-making in peace processes, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It also addressed the need to increase the protection of girls in armed conflict, especially the prohibition of their forced recruitment.

In 1993, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which recognized that women in situations of armed conflict are especially vulnerable to violence.

Mr. Chairperson

The work on the situation of children in armed conflict also contributed to a deeper understanding and greater urgency on these issues. In 1996, the Secretary-General's study on the impact of armed conflict on children emphasized the roles and experiences of girls and highlighted the ways in which they are placed at high risk during armed conflict.

In 1997, the Secretary-General appointed a Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict with a mandate to protect and promote the rights of war-affected children and ensure that those rights are comprehensively addressed by the main actors at all levels.

The efforts of the Special Representative have resulted in the inclusion of child protection officers in the mandates of the United Nations peacekeeping missions and, more recently, the development of a monitoring and reporting mechanism namely, Security Council resolution 1612 of 2005.

Mr. Chairperson

How did United Nations Security Council 1325 on Women and Peace and Security come about? In March 2000, the Security Council issued a Presidential Statement on International Women's Day on 8 March 2000. It recognized the link between peace and gender equality, and the fact that women's full participation in peace operations was essential to sustainable peace. This was an important precursor to resolution 1325.

A thorough review of the United Nations peace and security activities was undertaken by a high-level panel convened by the Secretary-General in 2000, which resulted in the Report of the Panel on the United Nations Peace Operations. The report recognized the need for equitable gender representation in the leadership of peacekeeping missions.

The seminar on the gender perspectives of multidimensional peacekeeping missions led to the development of the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations in June 2000.

The Windhoek Declaration was another critical step leading to the adoption of resolution 1325 of 2000.

On 31 October 2000, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 under the presidency of Namibia. This resolution was the culmination of several decades of growing realization of the diverse roles that women play both in conflict resolution and building peace and the result of active involvement and advocacy by women's organizations.

The resolution has galvanized the UN system, Member States and civil society organizations and has become one of the best known and the most translated resolutions of the Security Council.

Resolution 1325 has led to the deployment of gender advisers in peacekeeping operations and at headquarters, the development of a gender resource package and training materials. Since its adoption, resolution 1325 has also led to the inclusion of more comprehensive information and data on women and gender issues in both thematic and mission-specific reports presented to the Security Council for its review.

Mr. Chairperson

The United Nations Security Council holds an annual Open Debate on Women and Peace and Security at United Nations Headquarters in New York every October. During the open debate held on 18 October 2013, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2122, focusing on women, rule of law and transitional justice in conflict-affected situations. This new resolution puts in place a roadmap for a more systematic approach to the implementation of commitments on women, peace and security.

At the initiative of the Embassy of the Republic of Namibia, a Roundtable was held at the Headquarters of the African Union on Monday, 11 November 2013 to commemorate the 13th Anniversary of the adoption on 31 October 2000 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security.

Participants highlighted the need for women to remain engaged in conflict resolution efforts while emphasizing the need for the Peace and Security Council (PSC) to effectively advance the issues of women and peace and security. Participants were also in agreement that the commemoration should become an annual event on the calendar of the African Union Commission.

I, therefore, wish to call upon the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to consider including on its calendar the annual observation and commemoration of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 here at AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa as from 2014.

I Thank You!”

End of Quote