

**Statement by Mrs. Huree-Agarwal on Women, Peace and Security**  
**- 25 July 2002**

We join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno, Ms. Angela King and Ms. Heyzer for their very elaborate and useful presentations. Today's discussion has enabled us to get a broader view of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution and the role of women in peace-building. This meeting is an opportunity to take into account the study carried out in collaboration with Ms. King's office, with a view to implementing resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000.

We would also like to thank all those who have contributed to making this study possible. The delegation of Mauritius is happy to see the issue of the protection of the most vulnerable members of society brought to the forefront and to see a culture of protection and prevention being developed progressively. We fully agree with the analysis of the study with regard to the systematic targeting of women and girls during armed conflicts, due to their vulnerable status in society. Statistics testify that the vast majority of victims of armed conflicts throughout the world are women and children.

Women have assumed and have been made to assume different roles during conflicts. While in some cases they have actively participated in conflicts and have fought side by side with men, in most cases they are used as human shields, sex slaves and porters during conflicts. Not only are their human rights flouted but their dignity is undermined. They have undergone untold suffering and various other miseries.

It is most unfortunate that very little has been done to alleviate their sufferings, and yet, women can play an important role in peacemaking, such as the Mano River Women's Peace Network, which is doing an excellent job in the Mano River Union countries, and the Comoros Women's Association, which organized a weapon collection programme on the island of Anjouan during the internal conflicts. Such endeavours at the local grassroots level should be recognized and encouraged.

Through its peacekeeping missions and humanitarian organisations, the United Nations should step up efforts to work closely and in a

coordinated manner with regional, subregional and nongovernmental organizations to sensitize women with regard to gender-based violence, the possibilities of protection from all forms of violence and the rights of women and children. This could be done through the development of general terms of reference for gender specialists within human rights components of peacekeeping operations and through the proper training of peacekeepers on gender and women's rights issues.

In line with the Brahimi recommendations, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should work closely with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues in implementing projects designed to support the work of the civilian police in the field.

We would like to highlight the historic move taken by the African Union recently in Durban towards gender equality in Africa. Accordingly, the African heads of State have endorsed a set of recommendations that calls for a 50 per cent participation of women in all African Union organs. Their initiative is commendable and should be followed by other regional groups in order to ensure the adequate representation of women's interests at all levels, including key organs dealing with the maintenance of peace and security.

Due attention should also be given to women when creating peacekeeping and post-conflict peacekeeping operations. Necessary assistance should be given to women who have suffered rape and other atrocities and to those women and girls who are willing to testify against the perpetrators of such crimes. We also propose that programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration should include provisions for counselling and providing advice to women who have undergone traumas of conflict. In order to reintegrate these women in normal life, they should be fully rehabilitated and provided with the necessary assistance. In this respect, we highlight the need for women to have access to funds, the labour market and training facilities that will give them opportunities to contribute to the welfare and well-being of their families, as well as to society, in the most effective manner.

Finally, it is the view of my delegation that women can play an important role in preventing conflict, peacemaking and peace-building. We need to empower them and enhance their role so that they can make their valuable contribution to international peace and security.