

STATEMENT
BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL
ON
CONFLICT, PEACEKEEPING AND GENDER

BY

JOAN E. THOMAS
COUNSELLOR

PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

JULY 25, 2002

Please Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,

Let me express my delegations congratulations to you on your assumption of chairmanship of the Security Council for the month of July. I also commend you for convening this Open Meeting on conflict, peacekeeping and gender an issue which the Security Council and the international community has recognised as being equally important to the maintenance of international peace and security as is the cessation of cross border conflicts.

I also thank Mr. Jean- Marie Guehenno, Under Secretary General for DPKO, Ms. Angela King, Assistant Secretary General and Special Adviser on Gender Affairs, and Ms Noeleen Heyzer, Director, UNIFEM for their presentations.

Mr. President,

It has been almost two years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security which stressed the importance of bringing a gender perspective to the centre of all United Nations peace-making, peacekeeping, peace-building rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Most importantly, it underscored the need for international attention to what is basically women's human rights. We support the view that this issue should become a regular item on the international agenda and should be raised in thematic debates, and every time a country situation is addressed.

Today's meeting serves as a timely reminder that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations is yet to transcend the normative level to a more practical level throughout the United Nations system. We can all agree that some progress has been made in terms of the debate as to why integrating a gender perspective into peacekeeping is important as the legal foundation has already been established, but the mechanisms for implementing these still need to be developed in order to be operationalised into all areas of the UN System.

Mr. President,

My delegation thanks the Special Advisor for Gender Affairs, Miss Angela King for sharing preliminary findings of the Secretary General's Study and Ms. Noeleen Heyzer for her comments on the Independent Assessment Report.

I will now make comments on some of the issues emanating from the presentations to which Jamaica attaches importance:

1. The linkage between gender and peace is pervasive and is a complex issue. The experiences have all pointed to the fact that women and girls share similar experiences with men and boys during armed conflict, but that the culture of violence and discrimination against women and girls that exist during peace times is exacerbated during conflict.
2. Women are combatants, victims and perpetrators of violence and failure to include them in the peacemaking process will only prolong the conflict. Narrow definitions of who a soldier is or a fighter often function in ways that discriminate and marginalise women and girls involved in fighting forces. Nowhere is this more glaring than in the implementation of DDR programmes. DDR programmes often fail to make basic accommodations for women and girls. DDR programmes therefore fall short of the expectation of rehabilitation into society and what often obtains is that the woman returns to a life of poverty or faces stigmatisation. The United Nations, its Funds and Programmes as well as the Security Council needs to consider practical ways in which to structure its approach to DDR which takes into account the needs of female ex-combatants to ensure their rehabilitation to society.
3. Violence against women is also a growing concern. Positive developments in international humanitarian law including the work of the Ad Hoc International Criminal Court and the Special Court in Sierra Leone in the definition of rape and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity augur well for ending the impunity of violence

against women. This legal framework should be complemented at the local level by a comprehensive framework aimed at improving existing protection for women and girls.

4. The reports of gender based violence and related security issues in peacekeeping operations also need to be addressed. The importance of training in gender awareness and gender sensitivity of peacekeepers before going to the field is therefore of paramount importance. This training should not only be a one shot experience but be continuous. There is also the need for streamlined and coordinated codes of conduct, investigative and disciplinary mechanisms among the agencies both at headquarters and at the field.
5. Of concern also is domestic violence, which is becoming more widespread and systematic in conflict and post conflict societies. We commend the United Nation's efforts at addressing this in a peacekeeping environment, particularly in Kosovo and East Timor. The question is, how can there be more strengthened capacities within Peacekeeping operations to address this crisis. The need for counselors on staff of PKO as well as more training of PKO's in dealing with domestic violence could be a way forward. On the international level, States Parties to the Statute of the International Criminal Court could undertake national law reform to ensure compatibility with the Statute as a matter of priority and support universal jurisdiction, which pays particular attention to crimes against women.
6. This leads us to consider the role of women in conflict prevention, peace-building and peace-making. Women have played an instrumental role in early warning and conflict prevention as well as an instrumental role in brokering peace agreements serving as effective interlocutors between warring factions. Clear examples of the accomplishments can be drawn from the experiences of the Mano River Union Women's Network, the Women's Movements of the Great Lakes Region, Somalia and Afghanistan to name a few. Innovative ways of encouraging the participation of women in peace talks and peace

negotiations need to be maintained in a systematic way .The active participation of women in the political process is key to the sustained development of societies. While the examples cited by the presentations are positive steps, we believe that more needs to be done in supporting women in peace-building.

7. Regional organisations can play a critical role in promoting womens' groups, but these efforts must be bolstered by the United Nations through the strengthening of capacities of these organisations. Closer collaboration with the NGO Community could be encouraged but this should be accompanied by the allocation of adequate resources through technical assistance and training in a more systematic manner to these groups that often have expertise but lack the capacity to be fully functional in the peace process. We commend work of UNIFEM in their efforts at capacity building and training with the NGO Community and the Department of Womens' Affairs for their work at the Governmental level.
8. In SC Resolution 1325, the Security Council calls for insuring the inclusion of women's groups, yet there is no systematic mechanism to enable this essential participation in Security Council Missions. Security Council Missions to conflict areas should endeavour to meet with Gender Advisers to gain an insight into the role of women's' groups as well as inform decision-making in the formulation of peace-keeping mandates.
9. My delegation concurs with the view that the magnitude of current peacekeeping operations demands a high level of back-stopping from Headquarters in order to conceive, plan and deploy in a coordinated fashion. Given the increasing concerns about women in conflict situations, it is critical that a coherent policy be developed to address these needs. Security Council Resolution 1325 as well as the past two Reports of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations has all reiterated the importance of gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations. We wish to put on record Jamaica's continued support for the creation of a Senior Gender

Advisor P-5 post in the Best Practices Unit given the need for adequate back-up within the Secretariat for Gender Advisers in the field missions. The Senior Advisor should be at sufficiently senior level in order to work closely with the Under Secretary General who has direct access to senior management. We remain disappointed that to date this has not been fulfilled and look forward to the Report, which the DPKO will submit for consideration during the 57th Session.

10. Lastly, there is need to appoint more women as SRSG's. While we note that there has been some improvement more needs to be done. At present there are only one female SRSG and 3 Deputies. Member States should therefore endeavour to put forward to the Secretary General names of women with requisite experience and qualification who can fill such positions.