
STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,
ON THE OPEN DEBATE ON THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF ADOPTION OF THE UN
SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
ON OCTOBER 26, 2010



Mr. President

At the outset, I would like to place on record India's appreciation to you and your delegation for organizing today's open debate which marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325.

Mr. President

I am proud to belong to a country with a five thousand year old civilization that regards gender equality and the empowerment of women as its constitutive principles.

I am equally proud to be a Sikh, a religion which at the time of its founding, in the latter half of the fifteenth century, deemed it fit to incorporate gender equality and independence for women as among its essential attributes. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, said in 1499 that "[it] is a woman who keeps the race going" and that we should not "consider woman cursed and condemned, [when] from woman are born leaders and rulers."

In Sikhism, women are considered to have the same souls as men and an equal right to grow spiritually. They are allowed to lead religious congregations, take part in the Akhand Path (the continuous recitation of the Holy Scriptures), perform Kirtan (congregational singing of hymns), work as a Granthi, and participate in all religious, cultural, social, and secular activities.

Mr President,

The imperative of political empowerment of women cannot be overemphasized. India took a historic initiative of empowering women by reserving one third of the seats in more than 300,000 institutions of local self-government to women. As a result, today, out of the some 3.2 million elected representatives in these local bodies, there are 1.2 million women, about 86,000 of whom serve as chairpersons or vice chairpersons of their respective units.

We are taking further steps towards increasing the participation of women to 50 % in these institutions, which will take the number of elected women to 1.6 to 1.8 million. A Bill for the same is under the consideration of the Parliament of India. There are, perhaps, more democratically elected women in India alone than in the rest of the world put together. This political empowerment of women is an unprecedented feat in the entire history of the world.

Mr. President,

Today's open debate in the Security Council marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on "women and peace and security". I am honoured to take part in this debate.

When Resolution 1325 was adopted unanimously in 2000, it was a landmark resolution dealing with women's issues in the area of international peace and security. Recognizing this, the Secretary-General made a very pertinent point by saying that although women suffered the impact of conflict disproportionately, they also held the key to the solutions to the conflict.

Resolution 1325 highlighted the impact of armed conflict on women and the need for effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in peace processes.

Having had the resolution in operational mode for a decade, we now need to redouble our efforts to increase women's participation at all stages and all levels of the peace processes and peacebuilding efforts.

We can reach lasting peace and security in any country only when women are represented at the negotiating table or in talks on post-conflict reconstruction. In the same vein, let me add that the three pillars of lasting peace, namely, economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy, cannot be achieved without the active engagement of women.

Mr President,

India has consistently held the view that greater participation of women in the areas of conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peace keeping and post conflict reconstruction is an essential pre-requisite for lasting peace and security.

Let me also add my voice to other speakers who had called for greater deployment of female military and police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations, and to provide all military and police personnel with adequate training to carry out their responsibilities. In this regard, we encourage, especially those who champion the importance of participation of women peacekeepers and also have the inclination and capacity, to do so.

India has contributed more than 100,000 peacekeepers to virtually every peacekeeping operation in the past six decades. We have necessary disciplinary provisions in place to ensure that reports of incidents of violence against women or children or civilians are dealt with firmly, swiftly and resolutely within our existing legal provisions.

India even has the distinction of being the first country to deploy a full female peacekeeping unit of 100 personnel in Liberia since 2007. This oft cited Indian example, unfortunately still remains a rarity.

India will be happy to contribute positively to this process. As one of the largest troop contributing countries to the United Nations, India has been conscious of its responsibility as well as training of its troops on this important issue.

Mr President,

The United Nations system, Member States and civil society have made steady and noticeable efforts in implementing Resolution 1325.

While the Secretary General and several speakers before me have pointed out the mixed results in the implementation of the resolution by the international community and the UN system, it is worth noting that appointment of women in senior decision making levels as well as the participation of women in the mission planning, reporting, assessment, post-conflict planning and peacekeeping operations have actually increased. We welcome this but must stress the need to do much more.

Equally pertinent is the role played by civil society in internalizing the provisions of Resolution 1325 while addressing issues in various conflict zones. We would also, in particular, like to encourage local communities to step forward and assume their rightful role in conflict zones.

Mr President,

Discussions on the establishment of a Security Council Working Group dedicated to reviewing the progress in implementing this Resolution are both relevant and has our support. We are confident that such an effort will go a long way in transforming words into concrete action.

The UN system has also come up with a useful set of indicators as global markers of progress in the implementation of Resolution 1325. India has taken note of the twenty six global set of indicators in the four key areas.

We believe that reaching agreement on the set of goals, targets and indicators to monitor the implementation of the Resolution 1325 should be the first step in reducing defragmentation of information and monitoring progress in this critical and important issue.

We are equally mindful that the development of such indicators, benchmarks and guidelines, given their sensitivity, should involve a process of broader inter-governmental consultations and discussions before their eventual adoption. One must also be aware of the difficulties in obtaining authentic, credible, corroborative and verifiable data from conflict-ridden environments.

Mr President,

We are happy that the Member States were able to reach consensus earlier this year in establishing the UN WOMEN, which will be fully operational by January 2011. In that context, we are particularly pleased to note that the Under Secretary General who heads this Entity was with us earlier today.

With consolidation of authority and responsibility within the UN System on women issues, I am positive that the UN system will also coherently coordinate and assist Member States, upon their request, in the implementation of the Resolution 1325.

Mr President,

We unequivocally, unambiguously and resolutely condemn the abhorrent behaviour of sexual violence in armed conflict, regardless of who perpetrates it, be it parties to armed conflicts, peacekeeping personnel, including its civilian component, or humanitarian actors.

There is a need for more stringent regulations in combating and eliminating this menace. We would also request the Secretary-General to further strengthen his efforts to ensure zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Mr President,

We have not yet attained a global culture of human rights, which can serve as a unifying force rather than a divisive force. As the world's largest democracy, we consider it an honour to uphold and cherish the concept of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

I would like to reiterate India's firm commitment to its international obligations flowing out of the Resolution 1325 and its successor resolutions and look forward to engaging constructively and proactively with other delegations in the Security Council from the beginning of next year, when we assume our responsibility as a member of the Security Council.

Let us not lose the momentum which has been generated on this issue on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Resolution 1325 – a symbol of strength for women in peace and security.

Thank you, Mr President

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