

Statement at Security Council Arria Formula on Women's Participation in Peace Processes

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My name is Goretti Ndacasiyaba and I work for the association DUSHIREHAMWE, which means let's RECONCILE. An organization that has been involved for ten years, in peace building on behalf of grassroots women.

It is an honor and a privilege to be here today in front of such an august assembly composed of members of United Nations Security Council and of the international community. I use this opportunity to bring you the warmest greetings from the people of Burundi.

It also is my pleasure to use this unique opportunity that our sister international organizations have offered me, to give you an overview of my country situation, especially the daily lives of Burundian women who are facing the challenges of peace, security and development.

We positively appreciate the efforts of the United Nations through the work of the gender unit of the United Nations Mission in Burundi (ONUB), which has greatly helped Burundian women sensitize the government in the introduction of gender perspectives in the electorate process.

We also would like to salute the contribution of international organizations and of United Nations agencies that have assisted Burundian women in the peace negotiation processes and in the organization of elections that resulted in an effective participation of women in the institutions from top to bottom. For example we will list organizations such as: International Alert, TROCARE, UNIFEM, UNDP and UNESCO.

Burundi's present political situation is marked by progress in the democratic process and in the reinforcement of good governance as a result of a successful election process. The country is nonetheless still very fragile because of the five (5) following challenges for which I will prescribe recommendations for actions:

I-First, I will insist on the persistent insecurity caused by the National Liberation Front (a combatant group); an insecurity that is taking bigger proportions and is having damaging effects on women and children who are always displaced to refugee territories.

We are asking to the Security Council through ONUB to use all its power to impose urgent measures against the LNF with the goal of protecting civilian victims of continuous and aggravating treatments.

The women living in combat zones have direct experiences of NLF exactions (abuses) and should therefore be at the center of the cease-fire negotiations. We propose that women network like ours be consulted to assure that conflict zones like Bujumbura Rurale can have appropriate (adequate) representation. These women already have an expertise in conflict transformation (resolution).

Because Burundi Security is largely contingent upon the regional situation, we propose that the United Nations apply the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Conference on Peace, Security and Development.

We recommend that the United Nations take the engagement of bringing necessary resources so that women can develop the National Actions Plans pertaining to this conference.

II-The Second challenge pertains to the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of civilians.

The DDR programme completely neglects the participation of civil society and is being presently conducted under the sole control (supervision) of politicians and militaries. DDR is just another form of involvement of ex-combatants and militaries.

Arm proliferation among civilians is another threat to the security of the community, because the weapons are used for revenge, looting and sexual violence against women and girls.

To incite civilians to return their weapons, we propose instead that family- income generating projects be identified with the help of women. Again, civil society and women in particular, should have resources if they are going to be efficient in disarmament.

We recommend that the SC and the international Community require from the Government and from ONUB to design a clear strategy and to involve civil society, women in particular, in all DDR process and in disarmament of civilians. According to Paragraph 13 of SCR 1325, we also recommend that these programmes take into consideration, the specific needs of women ex-combatants and those of their dependants (widows and orphans) as well as military personnel.

III-The third challenge is related to justice and the mechanisms against impunity.

In Burundi, the problem of unpunished crimes against humanity is a major obstacle to a lasting peace. Our organization supports the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, composed of high levels national and international officials who are honest and impartial in the Burundian conflict, to recover truth on crimes committed since independence in Burundi.

We are inviting the Security Council to make this question a central point in the peace process consolidation and urge the Council to set up this commission without a delay.

We greatly insist that sexual violence committed during all the duration of the conflict be classified as crimes against humanity. We also demand that justice be done and be followed by the victims rehabilitation in all its aspect as required by SCR 1325 in its paragraph 11.

IV-The fourth big challenge is related to the (reinforcement) of good governance and democratic principles in Burundi.

The institutions that were set up after the recent elections together with civil society organizations have to be reinforced to give them the capabilities and the same vision to better pave the road to dialogue for peace and development.

For example the training programmes on individual and collective security issues as well as women's role in the peace process and in community reconciliation must be intensified (multiplied.)

We are hoping that the United Nations Commission that is intended for peace building through ONUB will be able to take the responsibility of supporting such important activities for the peace consolidation in Burundi.

Civil society organizations must also participate in peace and human rights education programmes with more institutional, material and financial resources.

We are demanding that the international community creditors be engaged in supporting the global process of (multi-sartorial) that also includes such women priorities as the questions of economic security and access to resources for their self reliance (autonomy.)

V-I would like to insist on the last but not least challenge which is related to the feminization of poverty and to the impact of HIV/AIDS that are both preventing a fair (equitable) development process.

After twelve (12) years of war, women have been more vulnerable and marginalized because of poverty and diseases such as aids and excessive violations of their rights.

We particularly would like to invite the various United Nations agencies for systemically including women organization like ours, in the conception, planning, evaluation and impact meetings so that all their interventions will be geared toward women's priorities.

I will not close without greatly thanking the international organizations that focus on women, peace and security for having given priority to the testimonies of women in the field.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Security Council, members of the international community, I would like to thank you again for allowing me to express the preoccupations of the members of my organizations. I hope that our message will reactivate your firm engagement to support women's work in the process of national reconstruction.

Thank you.