

65th General Assembly of the United Nations

United Nations Headquarters, New York City, 11 October 2010

**UN Security Council Resolution 1325 – Ten Years On  
Women Continue to Deepen Democracy**

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When UN Women was formally established on July second this year, women in the Netherlands – members of the public, opinion leaders and officials alike – were delighted that the international community had taken this historic step. They particularly welcome the paragraphs in the resolution on the importance of civil society participation in the new entity, including active engagement with and facilitation of women's groups. It is my honour and privilege, as their appointed representative, to extend to you today our congratulations on this achievement.

Women in the Netherlands certainly stand to gain from the work of UN Women, which includes boosting existing UN efforts to promote gender equality, increase opportunities for women and tackle discrimination around the globe, including in the Netherlands. At the same time, we are keenly aware that women from Rwanda to Afghanistan have even more to gain.

Let me give you an example. This summer, during a factfinding visit to Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I met with leaders from the women's movement in both countries. They had suffered sexual violence and its physical and social consequences, such as HIV infection and social exclusion. Yet they had found the power to form local and national NGOs to improve the status quo in their communities. They have achieved a great deal, yet they could achieve so much more if there were greater support from the global community.

So it is on their behalf, too, that I call today on the UN System and the UN Member States to fully implement Resolution 1325. This landmark resolution, adopted in October 2000, rightly reaffirms the important role women play in the prevention of conflict, in peace negotiations, and in post-conflict reconstruction. It also calls for special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence.

Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1889, adopted in recent years, provide concrete building blocks for implementing this important resolution.

Rosealba from the Congo and Roseanne from Amsterdam, and the delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, would like to focus your attention today on their political belief and the indisputable fact that women bring a unique and significant contribution to resolving conflict, rebuilding peaceful societies and deepening genuine democracy.

Deplorably, countries in conflict and stable states alike often fail to fully leverage the wisdom and leadership of women, which would benefit everyone. For example, it is only in the rarest of cases that women sit at peacemaking and reconstruction roundtables. Moreover, the percentage of women in decision-making positions has a long way to go before it reaches the 40-60% parity zone, a target endorsed by the UN's Economic and Social Council. And women continue to be seriously underrepresented as candidates for and holders of public office.

There is a high price to pay for this underrepresentation and de-facto exclusion. Not only does it form an obstacle to women's achieving their full potential – as is their right according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – it also ignores the unique and indispensable contribution that women could make to stabilising countries, and making societies more peaceful, prosperous and democratic.

Women often redefine political priorities, whether it be in voting booths, in schools and community centres, or in town halls and parliaments. They put neglected, but essential, issues on the political agenda. They advance gender-specific concerns, such as safety and female and maternal health. And the new perspectives they provide on mainstream political issues benefit everyone.

Significantly, many of these issues are Millennium Development Goals and other key UN goals endorsed and advanced by the UN Member States. They therefore deserve our utmost attention and concerted efforts.

With this in mind, I would like to conclude my statement with five specific calls for action on the part of the UN System and the UN Member States. These calls for action are based on my consultations with the women's and peace movements in the Netherlands and beyond.

I call upon the United Nations and its Member States to take every measure available to them to advance women's empowerment and equal participation in society, specifically:

- Firstly, to promote and support legal and institutional frameworks and electoral systems which provide a level playing field for all citizens, including women, to vote and hold public office.
- Secondly, to further forms of genuine democracy and good governance which create more opportunities for more people – including women – to participate directly in democratic processes in their societies.
- Thirdly, to actively support women's organisations which contribute to developing peaceful and democratic societies, empowering women, and mainstreaming gender, from local level up to the UN System as a whole.
- Fourthly, to encourage and support the development and implementation of National Action Plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325 in all Member States, with priority given to fragile states.
- Lastly, to promote and support the development and deployment of early warning systems that take full advantage of women as agents of change, thus doing more to prevent the outbreak of conflict.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This month marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1325. Over the years its implementation has gradually gained momentum, and much has been achieved. Yet so much more remains to be done if we are to bring about genuine democracy worldwide. So, wherever we live and work, let each and every one of us do our utmost to support women so they can unleash their full potential for the good of humanity.

Thank you.