



Remarks by H.E. Anne Namakau Mutelo, Ambassador of the
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Representative to the African Union and the United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa,
Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council for March 2015

Your Excellencies Members of the PSC
Your Excellencies Distinguished Invited Guests
Colleagues from the Civil Society
Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me welcome you all once again to yet another Open Session on **“Vulnerability of Women and Children in Conflict Situations in Africa”**. The first Open Session by the Peace and Security Council on this subject was held on 30 March 2010, during the commemoration of the first year of the African Women’s Decade. It was at that session that a Decision was taken for the Council to hold an open session focusing on this issue once every year. This is, therefore the 5th Annual Open Session on this important matter, and I have the honour and privilege to preside over it as Chairperson. I am also fortunate to have participated in the last two sessions (3rd and 4th) as an invited Guest and a Member of the Peace and Security Council respectively.

The year 2015 is especially significant for women not only in Africa but worldwide. It marks the 30th Anniversary of the 3rd World Conference on Women held in Nairobi, Kenya; 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +20); 15th Anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security (UNSC 1325+15), which was initiated by Namibia; conclusion of the MDGs process and the negotiations leading up to a Post-2015 Development Agenda and the possible adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and the 5th Anniversary or half year point of the Decade for African Women (2010-2020).

The African Union Summit Theme for 2015 is also “**2015 Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development Towards Agenda 2063**” and it will kick off the ten-year implementation schedule for major Continental projects identified within Agenda 2063, the African Union’s flagship programme that will assist the African Continent move forward and improve the lives of its people.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security started as the Windhoek Declaration that was the outcome of a Workshop on the “Namibia Plan of Action on “Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations” held on 31st May 2000. The Namibia Plan of Action and Windhoek Declaration lead to the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security on 31st October 2000, under Namibia’s Presidency of the Council during its tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Distinguished Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

We recognise the resilience, hard work, expertise, and dedication of African women workers and professionals, mothers, sisters, students and spouses. We pay tribute to them **all**.

The 21st **C**entury offers significant challenges to all our societies. We will stand a better chance to overcome them successfully, if we can draw on the combined resources of **both** women and men.

Once women are able to participate in all social, economic and political decisions on an equal footing with men, we will also make progress in eliminating the root causes of systemic violence against women. This will mark the transition towards sustainable and truly civilized societies.

Sadly, International Women's Day is also a reminder that in most countries, equality between women and men is still elusive. Discrimination of- and violence against- women **and girls** is persistent **not only** in Africa **but** in all other regions of the world.

The global picture, almost 20 years since the last International Women's Conference in Beijing/China in 1995, falls short of meeting the legitimate aspirations of women. Sadly, women continue to suffer inequality and violence simply because they are women. **Together** with children, they are the main victims of hunger across the world.

They continue to die **while** giving birth. They are gang-raped **and** abused **not only by complete strangers but also** by those close to them.. They are killed or maimed in the name of honour, for dowry issues, as a result of son-preference or because they lobby for polio vaccinations or basic schooling for girls. Women are specifically targeted in armed conflict.

When war ends, women are largely absent from the negotiating tables of peace processes and not included in **the recovery, reconstruction and rebuilding exercises of their States**.

Your Excellencies
Distinguished Guests

Participation in political and economic decision-making is uneven from one country to the next, but large strides are necessary almost everywhere to ensure that all societies can draw fully on the potential of their women, **mothers, wives and sisters**.

We commend all those women and men of goodwill who are committed to addressing these serious issues. As much as ever, global solidarity and action is needed. Men and women should join forces even more vigorously to ensure the full enjoyment of women's rights everywhere and to prevent violence against women wherever it occurs.

We can exchange views and best-practices on how to achieve equal economic independence, equal pay for equal work, equality in decision making; and dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence. **The** Media has a key role to play in continuing **to sensitize and** build consciousness to further the equality between women and men.

As we rally for more energetic action for women's rights, it is important to remember that women are **neither** a minority **nor** a vulnerable group. Women hold up one half of the sky. Down **here** on earth, they give birth to half the population, they teach in schools and work in hospitals; they keep our farms and factories going and our children and elderly cared for. Women are a rich social, economic and cultural resource to be treasured and enabled to reach their full potential.

As we commemorate yet another International Women's Day today, let us remember and reflect on the important position of women and the valuable contribution that they make to our societies as grandmothers, mothers, wives, sisters and aunties.

Happy International Women's Day!