

WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

CONTRIBUTION TO THE

ARRIA FORMULA MEETINGS

**FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
NEW YORK, 23 OCTOBER 2000**

BY

HONORABLE DR. INONGE MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ZAMBIA

**PRESIDENT, FEDERATION OF AFRICAN WOMEN
PEACE NETWORK**

WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY
BY
INONGE MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

Your Excellency, Madam Chairperson, your Excellencies honorable members of the Security Council, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very honored to participate in this historic and unprecedented debate on Women, Peace and Security in these corridors of the greatest power in our generation.

Madam Chairperson, on behalf of my colleagues here present, may I start by thanking the Republic of Namibia for the tremendous job they have done in opening doors for the issues concerning women, peace and security to be discussed here. I also wish to register my great appreciation to the Republic of Jamaica for their part in this historic meeting and for chairing the session. The role of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is fully appreciated.

Your Excellencies, women, peace and security go together. With peace and security, women thrive and are able to nurture their children and families. Without peace and security, life and nurturing are severely hampered.

Wherever conflict takes place, community members - particularly women - try to restore peace. In our contemporary times, there are many examples of women who have contributed significantly to peace.

In South Africa, Mali, Mozambique, Somalia, Guatemala, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, Burundi women have contributed to peace and security. We recall in Mozambique some years ago the women made public their demand for peace. They paralysed the streets of Maputo and the world got a glimpse of their concerns. They met the President of the country and the leader of the opposition and demanded for the increased representation of women.

As a result, women comprise more than 30% of Parliamentarians in Mozambique today. This is one of the highest participation rates of women in Parliaments in the world, and, in Africa, only South Africa has a higher rate. As we know, there's peace in Mozambique and the country is well on its way to development.

Even in the countries undergoing conflict, such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and in other countries of the world women are doing their best to contribute to peace. It is important to note that most of women's contributions are more cost effective than the normal conventional methods.

It is encouraging to notice the beginnings of appreciation for the role of women to peace and security.

In Africa, the organization of African unity and the Economic Commission of Africa have established the AFRICAN WOMEN'S COMMITTEE ON PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT. This committee has been approved by the Member States and Heads of State. What remains to be seen is the governments themselves involving women in peace discussions and negotiations.

Some of the people who are making peace are actually making war. We would like the Security Council to note that some leaders may be fueling conflict in their own countries while they play at making peace in peace negotiations. There has been instances where the negotiators speak peace but instruct their followers to continue the armed conflict. If we want peace and security, we have to consult and speak with people who are more committed to peace.

These are also Regional and National Organizations working towards peace and security. Among these is the Federation of African Women Peace Networks, Femmes Africaine Solidarite.

Some examples of involvement of women at peace tables have begun. We have seen this in Guatemala, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, in the Balkans and others.

These isolated examples need to become standard practice so that peace negotiations that leave out women become null and void. There is need to increase the representation of women in order to gain maximum benefit from their experiences. Isolated women for window dressing may have little impact. The greater the number of women, the better the chances for success.

Present efforts towards peace and security need to incorporate positive traditional practices. For example, Rwanda is effectively utilizing some of these in their reconciliation and reconstruction.

Other positive traditional practices concern Refugees. In the West province of Zambia for example, Refugees from Angola have been received in pre colonial era.

These refugees were rehabilitated quickly. They were given land and administrative functions. They were not isolated and encircled in fences and barbed wire.

Bringing women and women's groups into designing programmes with and for women refugees could go a long way toward addressing the inadequacies in current humanitarian programmes. Workers in every refugee camp should have access to comprehensive strategies that address the sexual violence that women survivors faced, and that provide critical economic and psychosocial support. The good practices generated by pilot programmes of such agencies as UNHCR and UNIFEM's African Women in Crisis initiative need to be endorsed by decision-makers and scaled up by mainstream agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. If the Security Council wants peace, they must seek it where it is found. Consultations with ordinary citizens such as women and youth in both urban and rural areas should contribute significantly.
2. In certain cases, there is a need to make the venue of the negotiation places to be more conducive to ordinary citizens. As soon as you refer to a peace "table" you eliminate the majority of women contributors. This means at times peace talks should move from the Peace Tables to Peace Mats, or Community Councils and other gathering places for the people.
3. If we want peace, we have to advocate for peace vocabulary. We have to be prepared to listen and learn in languages beyond the official UN languages.

This millenium is a good time to ensure that those adversely affected by conflict and those who need a peace environment take their rightful places as architects of safer and more secure societies that can emerge after war. Our hope is, that this session marks another step toward providing more opportunities for women's voices to be heard in building sustainable peace.