



**Keynote Address
of
Andrei Abramov, Chief of NGO Branch
On the occasion of
The 20th Anniversary of the Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) and Global
Women's Peace Network Assembly**

**Boreyeong City, Chung Nam, Korea
26 March 2012**

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to address this important forum on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI). The Federation strongly supports the Economic and Social Council commitment to further dialogue on the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals related to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

My most sincere congratulations go to all dedicated women and men of the Federation who have been working so hard in the past 20 years on many projects carried out by the Federation to empower women, improve their access to health and education, bring about reconciliation and peace and promote sustainable development. I would like to thank most sincerely Prof. Lan Young Moon Park, President of WFWPI International, my friend Ms. Motoko Sugiyama, WFWPI Vice-President and Director of WFWPI UN Office and Ms. Young Sun Choi, Secretary-General of WFWPI Korea for their dedication, excellent cooperation extended to the NGO Branch, outstanding organization of this event and warm hospitality.

Your anniversary comes at a time when discussions about peace, nuclear security, sustainable development, education, South-North partnerships and capacity building to accelerate the achievement of sustainable peace, security and prosperity world-wide are at the top of the United Nations and the global community agenda.

Future growth must increasingly come from peaceful, sustainable and gender equality-induced development and the empowerment of women.

Women's empowerment and education are powerful engines for peace and development as they transform both, economies and human lives. They broaden people's and in particular women's freedom of choice and action, empower them to participate in public, economic and social lives of their societies and equip them with the skills they need to develop their livelihoods.

During these 20 years, in many nations worldwide, through the Federation's projects, thousands of women who live in poor and less-developed rural areas, unemployed workers and recent school graduates from poor families received vital skills and micro loans to achieve greater social mobility and a way out of poverty.

But, perhaps, equally important is that your work shows what the poor can make out of what they have and not what they were given at birth. You help women find confidence and self-esteem to face their future and gain respect from the entire society. Broadening people's opportunities and building inclusive societies is what the Federation's projects are all about!

I am also conscious that our host, the Federation, has initiated and works hard on reconciliation activities known as the Interracial Sisterhood Project "Bridge of Peace" bringing together communities after prolonged conflict.

I would like to thank you and, using this opportunity, to honour all of your colleagues in civil society, many of whom are on the frontlines - literally on the battle lines - in the fight for gender equality in war torn countries around the world.

I have no doubts that the successes that have attended United Nations initiatives in peace, development, education, healthcare, humanitarian and human rights fields owe much to our ability to work at global and regional levels in close partnership with non-governmental organizations.

As the United Nations is working hard on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) of the Security Council and the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, it should be listening more to civil society's ideas of what needs to be done because they are the most practical and down to earth. NGOs work with people at the grass roots. They provide assistance to the most needy and act as watchdog and ombudsman, a witness and monitor. They have the power to speak for the powerless and influence the powerful.

Our experience in implementing Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, at MDG+10 in 2010 and last year at High-level Meetings on youth, HIV/AIDS, Non-Communicable Diseases and the Durban Review Conference proves time and again that a partnership with NGOs is no longer an option but a necessity. The problems facing the world today are so large and complex that no single nation can solve them in isolation; nor should they be the exclusive domain of governments. It is a task to which we must all contribute, including NGOs.

Over 16,000 NGO representatives participated last year alone in UN conferences, commissions and other forums organized by the UN. NGOs used the opportunity to energize their worldwide networks by convening meetings at regional level and encouraged national affiliates to raise awareness and engage into discussions of the UN peace and development agenda.

Hundreds of NGOs addressed UN meetings contributing to a wide range of issues. They organized themselves into thematic and regional caucuses and formulated their positions on issues.

The only way to achieve our goals –to build sustainable peace and achieve prosperity, to reduce poverty and conflict around the world, to eliminate rape as a weapon of war, to combat the culture of impunity for sexual violence,– is to draw on the full contributions of all actors – Governments, civil society and the private sector in every aspect of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace building.

In the area of peace and security, we have good news and bad news. Looking out at the world as we find it today, the actual number of armed conflicts, not only between states but also within them, is on the decline. According to recent Human Security Reports, as horrific as conflict and mass violence continues to be, it is significantly less than it was decades ago: there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of conflicts, down 40 per cent since the early 1990s whereas the number of mass killings has fallen 80 per cent since the late 1980s.

So much for good news. The bad news is the continuing existence of conflicts that have a potential to overflow national borders, threatening *failing or failed states*. A recent Failed States Index for 2011 released by the Washington-based Fund for Peace, counts 36 vulnerable states classified as “critical” or “in danger” with Somalia, Chad, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti ranked at the top. These are states where, as a result of government inaction or incapacity, their own peoples are often at extreme risk; and where their weakness is such that they often pose a risk as well to the peoples of *other* countries through their export of fleeing refugees, economic problems, ethnic and religious tensions, health pandemics or environmental disasters.

In these circumstances, development, security and human rights form the indispensable foundation for collective security and well-being. Poverty and inequality may not necessarily cause conflict but will increase its likelihood or sustain it. In turn, conflict increases poverty and undermines equality. The common trait of these threats is the marginalization and exclusion of vulnerable groups, including women, from societal development.

Hence, the socio-economic fabric of a country has now to be the major focus of attention. Societal dynamics become a key guide to finding entry points into resolving disputes. Groups within each society and especially women's groups, non-governmental, religious or other organizations have a major role to play. It is important that these groups must be part of the peace negotiations, in planning for the future, in rebuilding and in crafting preventive strategies to avoid future conflict. Consequently, gender equality and the full enjoyment by women of their rights are essential to the advancement of development, security and human rights.

Women and girls in war torn zones are the ones mostly affected by conflict. They experience war and conflict in different ways compared to men. They are single heads of households, principal care givers; victims of rape, trafficking, sex slavery and forced prostitution. But women are also sometimes perpetrators of violence and participants in conflict.

At the same time, women have been actually actively involved in the peace processes, particularly at the grassroots level, but also increasingly at the national and international levels. Grassroots women's organizations in several countries have sponsored peace education, encouraged child soldiers to lay down arms (Liberia), organized groups advocating peace across party and ethnic lines (Cyprus, Sri Lanka, former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland), organized campaigns against small arms (African Women's Committee for Peace and Development), influenced repatriation processes and established services for returning exiles or refugees (Guatemala), negotiated hostage release, and counseled traumatized women and girls (Rwanda and DRC), and established legal support groups to get recognition for women's rights to land and household property which may have been in the name of a spouse killed or "disappeared" in the conflict (Burundi, Nicaragua, Rwanda).

Starting from grassroots activities and using traditional indigenous conflict management approaches, such as *abantu*, the peace tent, peace caravans and many other fora, women's organizations in conflict and post conflict countries have grown in strength and legitimacy. They have extended their roles to a wider national political agenda. Women have been part of peace negotiations in Burundi, Guatemala, Namibia, Palestine and South Africa, for example. Drawing on shared values of security, women engage in confidence-building programmes across communities and play a key role in fostering reconciliation both during conflict and after. Women's networks mobilize women across party lines and are sometimes able to build consensus around peace proposals.

Many contributions of women to peace processes led the Security Council, in its resolution 1325 binding on all UN Member States, to fundamentally change the image of women, as exclusively victims of war to that of active participants as peacemakers, peacekeepers, peace-builders and negotiators.

Last year we commemorated the 10th anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and we asked ourselves the important questions – has real progress been made and what needs to be done to implement it fully?

As somebody who has been observing progress or lack of thereof from 1998, when I was appointed as Desk Officer for the issue of women and peace in the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women led by my dear colleague and friend late Angela V. King I must say "yes": progress has been made.

I vividly remember the humble beginnings of raising awareness of the issue in the Security Council. It took time and much effort of very dedicated women and men and I must mention Mr. Gurirab, Foreign Minister and Ambassador Anjaba of Namibia, Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Ambassador Patricia Durant of Jamaica and, of course, Angela King, Nahleen Heyzer (then Executive Director of UNIFEM), Nafis Sadik (then Executive Director of UNFPA) and many other wonderful women and men who worked hard to place the item on the agenda of the Council.

It was a very different atmosphere in the Council. Many members of the Council took strong exception of the very idea of having the item on its agenda. Violence against women in armed conflict was a taboo. Any suggestion of NGOs speaking to the Council met with a lot of resistance.

As somebody who has seen the process of drafting Resolution 1325 from the beginning I can tell you that without very dedicated advocacy and civil society's efforts to write a very first draft of the resolution; the 8th of March 2000 Presidential statement of the Security Council delivered by Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh; without the Windhoek Declaration and Plan of Action on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations held in Namibia by DPKO and our Office in May 2000; without determined efforts to review and expand the draft by UN entities led by UNIFEM and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues we would not have today this document.

While recognizing that we are deeply indebted to all partners for their contributions to the successful adoption of the resolution by the Security Council, I would like to pay special tribute to two outstanding women from Jamaica, Ambassador Durant and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women Angela King. Two days before informal consultations on the draft resolution it became clear that an almost 20 page long document stood practically no chance to be adopted by the Council during the Presidency of Namibia. It needed to be reduced to a workable document which, while keeping the most important strategic points on women and peace, would avoid many political pitfalls and undercurrents that would make it impossible for the Council to adopt the draft. We worked till the wee hours in the morning to come up with the right document.

Though now, in retrospect, I can see that it was not a perfect document and some parts needed more clarity and strategic focus, during the informal consultations no delegation raised any objections to the draft resolution. And it was adopted by consensus on 31 October 2000. These two women, with their encyclopedic knowledge of political and gender issues, peace processes and internal workings of the Security Council, made what seems to be impossible by drafting – overnight - a document which withstood the test of the Council's scrutiny and became the most authoritative guidance for Governments, civil society and other actors in dealing with gender issues in conflict and post conflict situations.

The resolution recognized that women and children are most affected by conflict and acknowledged the critical role women can play in preventing and resolving conflicts and in building peace and urged member states to include more women at all levels of decision making and field operations related to conflict resolution. It asks the Secretary-General and member states to include a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations, both on and off the ground, and to provide training on the protection, rights, and needs of women in post-conflict reconstruction. The resolution not only calls for action within the UN but also urges all parties involved in conflict resolution to adopt a gender-conscious approach during disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. The policy statement stresses the responsibility of all actors to protect women from gender-based violence, especially rape, and to prosecute those guilty of perpetrating such crimes. It also calls for the support of women-led peace initiatives.

Ten years after the resolution was adopted, its unsurpassing importance for the future of conflict prevention and management is becoming clearer each day.

The open meeting of the Security Council on women, peace and security on 26 October 2010 presided over by H.E. Mr. Eriya Kategaya, First Deputy Prime Minister of Uganda, who held the Council's rotating presidency for October, was a testament to the remarkable success of the resolution, which has a unique authority. It has already been registered on public consciousness as few UN resolutions ever have. Major changes have taken place at the national, regional and international levels. It has become the centerpiece of a global movement reflecting the importance of enhancing women's role in conflict prevention and resolution, while at the same time its provisions have brought to centre stage, the plight of millions of women and girls victimized by armed conflict and the role they can play.

According to a presidential statement read out by the Council's President after the 2010 open debate, the Council adopted a set of indicators presented by the Secretary-General for monitoring the situation of women in all situations of conflict and all peacemaking efforts, as well as activities to implement resolution 1325 (2000) by national and international actors, particularly all parts of the United Nations system. It is a very important development which will allow civil society to monitor progress in gender equality in each conflict situation. I call on the Federation to make its contribution to progress of women's empowerment in conflict and post conflict countries where you are present and keep Governments accountable for the pace of progress.

A great deal has been accomplished during the past ten years in the implementation of resolution 1325.

Gender awareness

The Security Council has led the way by focusing more on gender issues in its debates on specific conflicts and by including specific mandates regarding the status of women, for example, in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, Liberia and Darfur, Sudan. Members of the Council met with local women's groups during all the Council's missions to West Africa, Congo, the Great Lakes region, Afghanistan and Haiti.

Today more and more, women participate in mediating and negotiating peace, in searching for justice, in fostering reconciliation, in supporting disarmament and demobilization, and in shaping development policies and rebuilding institutions.

More and more, the Security Council ensures that peace processes empower women and advance gender equality and has remained actively engaged. It has held several open debates on women, peace and security, as well as Arria formula meetings to inform its work.

The role of women in peace and security is now more clearly integrated into the Council's deliberations. Within the Security Council itself, resolution 1325 (2000) has led to the adoption of other key resolutions on women, peace and security, including resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009) on sexual violence during conflict and 1889 (2009) which urges UN Member States and other relevant actors to take further measures to improve women's participation in all stages of peace processes.

The work of the Security Council and the United Nations to bring sharper attention to the issues of women, peace and security in general and sexual violence in conflict, in particular are worthy of note. In response to Security Council resolution 1888, the Secretary-General appointed a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict to bring greater focus to this challenging aspect of the area of women peace and security.

At the interagency level, gender issues are increasingly discussed in inter-agency fora, such as Executive Committees on Peace and Security and Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Development Group etc.

More and more, UN entities work closely and actively with Governments and women's organizations, including through the UN System-wide Action Plan on implementation of resolution 1325. In all UN entities there are gender advisers and gender units.

Women and governance

There is increased attention to women's participation in decision-making and peace processes and establishment of dedicated mechanisms, such as inter-agency working groups, observatories and networks, to support and monitor the implementation of national strategies and actions on women, peace and security.

In this area, the UN has actively participated in the work regarding the drafting of constitutions and holding of elections. The UN has supported greater participation of women in electoral processes and in nation-building as a whole. In a number of post-conflict countries there has been a dramatic increase in numbers of women in national politics in part because of the use of electoral quotas. In Nepal women hold one third of seats in the Constituent Assembly. More than half of Burundi's Senate is female. Sudan's general election last year resulted in a national assembly with women in over a quarter of seats. In Rwanda, women won nearly 49 per cent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and in Timor-Leste, 27 per cent of seats in Parliament.

UN entities such as the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs, UNDP and UN Women supported women's organizations and groups to build their capacities and take part in peace making and peace building efforts. Civil society, from grass roots level to international fora, has and continues to support the implementation of resolution 1325.

With regard to gender balance in peace operations, I would like to underscore that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed to peacekeeping operations and special political missions a record number in the history of the United Nations – 11 - of women Special Representatives or Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General.

In 2010, Heads of missions — women and men alike — held 27 Open Day meetings to consult with women's organizations and receive their insights.

Through advocacy and targeting of police and military, the number of women peacekeepers in those units has increased. Currently, women constitute 9 per cent of the UN police and 4.2 per cent of military experts and 2.3 per cent of troops.

Gender-action work plans

In October 2004, the Security Council called on Member States and the Secretary-General to prepare action plans for implementing resolution 1325. 23 countries, among them Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom have developed concrete national action plans to implement it. However, very few developing countries have their national action plans prepared so far.

At the level of the United Nations system, UN Women coordinates the implementation of the System-wide Action Plan outlining the efforts being made by the United Nations system to implement resolution 1325. Close to 40 UN departments, programmes, and specialized agencies provided their inputs into the plan based on mandates contained in resolution 1325 and related Presidential Statements, in such areas as protection, participation in peace processes, gender mainstreaming, humanitarian assistance, post-conflict reconstruction etc.

Gender mainstreaming

Major strides have been made to mainstream a gender perspective in areas related to peace and security and post-conflict development. An Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality coordinates system wide gender mainstreaming activities. In cooperation with the Network, UN Women has been working on a system-wide policy and strategy for gender mainstreaming. The Network's Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, which includes also NGOs, coordinates the preparation of briefing notes for Security Council missions and gender-related guidelines for conflict area assessment missions.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations developed a comprehensive "Gender Resource Package for Peacekeeping Operations" and "Gender Guidelines for Mine Action". The Package and the guidelines offer concrete guidance on how to identify the various gender issues and how to mainstream gender. The Department of Political Affairs, DPKO and the Department of Field Support (DFS) finalized Joint Guidelines on Enhancing the Role of Women in Post-conflict Electoral processes. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights took new steps to mainstream gender in its monitoring and reporting in conflict areas. Other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and International Labour Organization (ILO), to name but a few, have developed policies and guidelines for gender mainstreaming in post-conflict situations.

Gender advisers

DPKO has deployed Gender Advisers to all major peacekeeping operations. In some cases, they have formed Gender Units, in other cases the Gender Advisers sit as part of the Human Rights Unit. Today, all missions, have operational capacities for gender mainstreaming. In October 2010, 90 female police advisers from Rwanda were deployed to the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) to serve as gender-based violence and child protection advisers. Sierra Leone, which only allowed women into their armed forces in

2008, recently sent seven female peacekeepers to Sudan, including one female Brigadier General and 20 more women peacekeepers from this country are expected.

Enforcement of codes of conduct

Since 2002, when allegations of widespread sexual exploitation and abuse of refugee and internally displaced women and children by peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in West Africa highlighted the vulnerability of women and girls, new systems for protecting against and monitoring sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers and aid workers have been established. The Secretary-General issued instructions on the expected standard of conduct followed by a zero-tolerance policy, and has also taken drastic measures to enforce them, including:

(a) A non-fraternization policy, a curfew and a ban on visits by uniformed and civilian staff to the premises and areas frequented by prostitutes

(b) Only since 1 January 2004 to June 2007, the UN has investigated 434 cases of alleged sexual violations - dismissing 19 UN staff and repatriating back home 158 military personnel and national police;

(c) The UN Security Council held its first-ever meeting on 31 May 2005 to hold countries that contribute troops more accountable, urging them to end impunity and prosecute perpetrators at home. France, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Tunisia, and South Africa have announced criminal or disciplinary action against some of their peacekeepers. Only a few days ago, two Pakistani peacekeepers were sentenced in an unprecedented trial held in Haiti by a Pakistani military court to two years of imprisonment for sexual violations.

(d) The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations has created special units in each mission to monitor conduct and report incidents.

(e) Many UN agencies have developed and issued new and strengthened codes of conducts. For example, in UNHCR, all 6,000 employees have signed a new code of conduct calling on them to renew their support for human rights and dignity of all people served by the agency.

The Secretary-General is determined to fully enforce the zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse by a few of those who have disgraced the blue helmet with predatory sexual behavior and undercut the vital role the Organization plays in peace processes.

Training

This is increasingly becoming an important part of our work in integrating a gender perspective into peace operations. DPKO, DPA, OCHA and other UN entities, such as UNICEF and UNHCR have developed practical training tools and have organized workshops to sensitize staff to the needs of both women and men and assist them in programming for gender equality.

DPKO has produced a generic training package on *Gender and Peacekeeping Operations*. This has been made available to Member States for pre-deployment training of military and civilian police personnel and is part of Standardized Generic Training Modules. It is the responsibility of Member States to provide such gender-awareness training to both military and civilian police personnel participating in peacekeeping operations.

Civil Society

Civil society continues to play a vital role in highlighting the role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts.

It has served as a catalyst for women all over the world to mobilize in their efforts to achieve equal participation. Women at the grassroots level in many conflict-ridden countries have used this resolution as an advocacy tool to lobby for their inclusion in peace-building and reconstruction processes in their countries, including in elections and constitution-making bodies.

NGOs have also undertaken awareness-raising and advocacy efforts on this Security Council resolution. They organize workshops and conferences as well as disseminate information and research on women, peace and security. Within the United Nations, the NGO Working Group on Women and Peace and Security continues to emphasize accountability and the need to establish a monitoring framework for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In 2010, a high-level Civil Society Advisory Group was established and its chair has participated as an observer in a High-Level Steering Committee, led by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, to guide preparations for the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000).

Yet much more needs to be done. At the open meeting to commemorate the 10th anniversary of resolution 1325 that heard from more than 90 speakers, the Council noted with grave concern that, despite the normative framework and a wide range of activities spurred by the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), women and girls were still ravaged by violence, and women's participation at all stages of peace processes remained too low.

Despite many initiatives and programmes by UN entities, Governments and civil society to enhance the role of women in peace processes and protect their rights, I regret to conclude that since 2000 insufficient progress has been achieved in making women equal partners in peace processes. There is a lot of work to be done in terms of making the resolution accessible and bridging the gap between taking what is written as policy and being able to manifest it at the grassroots level.

Why and what are the challenges in harnessing the full force of women's agency in the peace and security sphere? Besides the lack of political will to see women as equal partners, to me, there are three major challenges that women and societies face in the struggle for women to take their rightful place at the peace table.

First, women are still poorly represented at higher levels of decision-making. Measures such as proportional representation, quotas, and a percentage of women on lists of candidates successfully used in many countries will enable women to move ahead numerically, and transform parliamentary agendas. To meet this first challenge, current power structures have to recognize that by denying women the right to be part of the decision making process, they are denying true democracy and the more comprehensive political agenda which it introduces. Political parties must allocate adequate resources and training for women candidates.

A second challenge is gender-based violence against women. This persists and deepens in all countries of the world. Actions such as the horrific mass rapes in July and August 2010 in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be allowed to continue with impunity. These events are an affront to humanity and underline the desperate urgency of accelerating implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) to strengthen capacity of member states to resolve conflict and build security and justice systems that protect the human rights of all. We cannot rest until impunity for sexual violence is ended, until there are adequate laws to deal with these crimes and until the military, judiciary and the police are sensitized to the nature and effect of gender based violence and held fully accountable for enforcing anti-violence laws.

Perhaps, the most insidious barrier to women's equal participation in decision-making and leadership, however, is persistent stereotypical attitudes towards the respective gender roles of women and men. This constitutes the third challenge.

To break the cycle of violence and discrimination against women it is vital to change these attitudes both within formal government and within society and both on the part of men and among women themselves. Without a voice in decision-making, women have no access to resources. Without access to resources and to the institutions which shape social norms and attitudes, women will continue to be marginalized. To sustain these efforts and to change attitudes, women need support networks and the support of the international community.

Dear colleagues and friends,

Peace cannot be imposed from outside. Outsiders can help to draw up agreements and bring former adversaries to the negotiation table. A cease-fire may be declared and United Nations or Regional peacekeepers

may be sent to monitor and keep control. But real peace, the bonds of trust and confidence, holding families and communities together, cannot be recreated overnight. It must be built on the interrelation of social and cultural values, international human rights norms and democratic principles. It takes time and patience. It requires the involvement of all sectors of society in the process, all women and men.

There can be no peace without gender equality and no sustainable people-centred development without both peace and equality. Managing conflicts and rebuilding societies are no longer the exclusive preserve of men. We cannot exclude half the world's resources from participating in the peace process. Without equal and fair participation of women in peace we will never achieve the vision of a world free of the scourge of war, poverty and gender discrimination outlined in 1945 by the Founding Fathers and Mothers of the United Nations Charter.

It is our duty and, indeed, our obligation to millions of women in conflict areas to use the opportunity offered by Security Council resolution 1325 to set in motion perhaps one of the most promising approaches to conflict resolution of this century – a comprehensive approach based on democratic values and gender equality.

Thank you.