

OPENING REMARKS

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-
GENERAL FOR WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL, MR. MOHAMED IBN CHAMBAS
OPEN DAY ON SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 (2000) AND SUBSEQUENT
RESOLUTIONS ON WOMEN, YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY**

Praia, 26 November 2018

Your Excellency, Jorge Carlos de Almeida Fonseca, President of the Republic of Cabo Verde

Your Excellency, Jean Claude Brou, President of the ECOWAS Commission

Your Excellency, Julio Herbert, Deputy Minister of Prime-Minister for Regional Integration

Your Excellency, Jorge Pedro Mauricio Dos Santos, President of the National Assembly of Cabo Verde

Your Excellency, Ligia Lobrano Dias, First Lady of the Republic of Cabo Verde

Your Excellency, Ministers and Parliamentarians of the Republic of Cabo Verde and from other countries of West Africa and the Sahel Region

Your Excellency, Ambassadors and diplomatic corps in Cabo Verde

Dear women, young women and men from West Africa and the Sahel

Distinguished development partners and bilateral representatives in Cabo Verde,

Colleagues from ECOWAS and the United Nations System,

Dear Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased that the Highest Authorities of Cabo Verde, including the First Lady, are present at this meeting.

I am also pleased that Mrs. Diana Ofwona, Regional Director for West and Central Africa of UN Women, has been able to join us.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the President of the Republic of Cabo Verde for accepting to co-chair this year's regional dialogue known as the "regional Open Day on Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions on Women, Youth, Peace and Security".

I am also pleased to recognize the presence of the Distinguished President of the ECOWAS Commission. Your presence in Praia this morning shows the continuous commitment of ECOWAS to support its members states in their efforts to implement all resolutions related to Women, Peace and Security.

I would also like to express a special welcome to the Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps and development partners.

Dear women, young women and men leaders from rural and urban areas in ECOWAS Members State and the Sahel region, it is an honor to be here with you for this regional dialogue.

We hope that the organization of an annual regional discussion around the UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which started in 2010 upon the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations will continue to be sustained as a mechanism to contribute to solving the problems we are faced with in our endeavors.

As you know, Open Days provide a platform for women and youth leaders to exchange views with senior regional leaders and UN officials on their experiences, concerns and priorities. Moreover, the event is expected to contribute to national

and regional conflict prevention and resolution efforts and to inform and influence policies and programmes related to the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since last year, we have seen positive examples of progress. Women organizations continue to make an impact: In Guinea Bissau, women contributed significantly to keeping the dialogue alive amongst political stakeholders. In the same country, a quota law of 36% for women's participation in elected positions was adopted. In Mali, women successfully contributed to negotiating between armed actors to halt the escalation of intercommunal tensions. In Senegal and the Gambia, women were elected as mayors. In Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Nigeria and Burkina-Faso, women were nominated to the highest position in their National Administrations.

UNOWAS has been providing support to ECOWAS in the implementation of the framework and action plan on Gender and Elections, as well as of the 2017-2020 Action Plan of the Women, Peace and Security Component of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework. We are also supporting the review and validation of the Manual on Integrating Gender into the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Mechanism; and hope to present soon an ECOWAS framework on Gender and Mediation for adoption. Additionally, we recently launched a UNOWAS-ECOWAS-UNSCC initiative to promote women's meaningful participation in sustaining peace initiatives at local levels and in communities. In this regard, we should take note of the steps that ECOWAS has taken towards the establishment of a regional group of Eminent Women for West Africa. Moreover, UNOWAS took the lead, in partnership with ECOWAS, UN Women and other members of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel to undertake a comparative

study focused on Women's political participation in West Africa which highlighted key achievements and challenges in 10 countries. The findings and recommendations of this study will be shared with you today.

Distinguished Participants

Despite progress in some areas, the facts on the ground show that we still have a long way to go. The participation of women in formal peace processes remains extremely limited. Between 1990 and 2017, women worldwide constituted just 2 percent of mediators, 8 percent of negotiators and 5 percent of witnesses and signatories in all major peace processes. Violent conflict however continues to have a devastating effect on women and girls. The United Nations documented more than 800 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2017 – a 56 percent increase since 2016. Female human rights defenders, political leaders, journalists and activists, who play an important role in addressing the root causes of conflict, remain the targets of spoilers. The marginalization of women, the lack of access to basic services such as health and education, and economic disempowerment continue to be both a cause and an effect of violent conflict in the region and worldwide. We are therefore putting the strategic importance of gender equality for peace and stability in the region at the heart of our partnerships with regional organizations.

Last month, during the open debate on Women, peace and security in New York, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, highlighted the fact that: “There is a significant gap between what we say, and what we do. Every year, we make laudable commitments – but they are not backed with the requisite financial and political support. We repeat statistics about the sustainability of inclusive peace processes – but that is not how we mediate most conflicts. We extol the positive influence of women peacebuilders – but provide little space for their participation. We rely

heavily on women's organizations – but do not fund them adequately. We recognize the importance of gender analysis – but cut the budgets for such expertise.”

Distinguished Participants,

Today we are requested to direct our actions towards a concrete impact. We are also called upon to back our actions with the requisite financial and political support, allow more efficient, effective and integrated ways of conducting mediation, give more space to the participation of women and youth and provide adequate funds to women's organizations and gender expertise within the region.

For this to happen, we need to focus our actions along key strategies including: gender parity, inclusivity through the promotion of women's meaningful participation to achieve sustainable peace, a gendered approach to peace and security through the support of local women groups that negotiate humanitarian access and support building resilience at community-level within peacebuilding processes, financing the women, youth, peace and security agenda and including gender analysis in all relevant decision-making documents and reports.

As you may be aware, in two years' time, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), the fifth anniversary of the global agreement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration. In preparation, Secretary-General Guterres has encouraged all member states to undertake assessments of the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions related to women, youth, peace and security. UNOWAS and ECOWAS Commission have already planned a joint assessment, and I hope all member states will be engaged in this process.

Distingue(e)s Participant(e)s, Mesdames, Messieurs,

Le dialogue d'aujourd'hui devrait nous permettre d'articuler des mesures concrètes qui renforceront le rôle des femmes et des jeunes dans les instances de prise de décision.

Ensemble, nous devons et pourrons accélérer l'intervention et le renforcement du rôle des femmes et des jeunes pour améliorer le développement et consolider la paix en Afrique de l'Ouest et au Sahel.

C'est une nécessité politique et stratégique pour qu'on puisse -ensemble- inscrire l'Afrique de l'Ouest et le Sahel dans une dynamique de développement et de paix durables.

Je souhaite que ce dialogue soit riche et qu'il permette, je l'espère, de consolider cette dynamique de développement et de paix durables à laquelle aspirent les populations en Afrique de l'Ouest et le Sahel.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to close with a quote from Secretary-General Guterres, who recently noted that "We will never effectively address complex global challenges like climate change, inequality and conflict without the expertise of half our population. Women's contributions are essential to creating resilient, peaceful societies on a healthy planet."

In this regard, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of the United Nations, and in particular, my office, UNOWAS, to continue providing support for the implementation and monitoring of recommendations that will be derived from our discussions.

As I end, let me once again express my gratitude and warm appreciation to His Excellency Mr. President, the First Lady of Cabo Verde and all of you for your presence at this event.

Muito obrigado a todos.

I thank you for your kind attention.

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