

I am deeply touched by this great honour to deliver this year's Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture. I was in the Democratic Republic of the Congo last year, invited by women leaders who were frustrated by the inadequate implementation of the Peace accord and by the violence that had broken out in Ituri and Bunia. Even though we had facilitated their participation to influence the official peace process in Sun City, South Africa from February to April 2002, resulting in Article 51 of the Transitional Constitution on the involvement and rights of women, the women were not being taken seriously in its implementation. They knew that the United Nation's Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM, had provided much of the technical support to the Namibian Presidency of the Security Council in October 2000 and facilitated women in conflict zones to meet, for the first time, members of the Security Council. All this had contributed to Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. At that time, I had promised to work with women in conflict zones to ensure accountability and implementation of this resolution on the ground. These women now wanted to know what could be done to amend this, and how their own efforts in organizing and mobilizing their communities could be recognized and supported by this process.

In the midst of these meetings, a colleague reminded me that the world lost a Secretary-General of the United Nations during his efforts to bring about peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was then that the legacy and spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld came to life for me, as I met with Congolese women, forty-two years after his death. I thought to myself, if Dag Hammarskjöld were here, he would be proud of where we are today. For despite the factions, challenges, and continuing violence in certain areas, the UN did not abandon the people of the DRC, so that there is today a formal peace accord, and, for the first time, women are engaged in the rebuilding process.

If the UN today is still regarded by many as the moral force capable of bringing diverse interests together to forge common security, it is because of the vision that Dag Hammarskjöld helped to create. He was a Secretary-General that made sure that the resolutions of the UN lived up to the words with which its charter begins, and touched the lives of "We the Peoples of the United Nations." He saw his tasks as "working on the edge of the development of human society." He saw the UN as a "venture in progress towards an international community living in peace under the laws of justice." He was a hands-on Secretary-General who dared to deal with the major conflicts of his time, a champion of peace with justice, who tried to bring fractured communities together, a person of great stature, integrity and moral courage who dared to go to the edge to guide the world so that coming generations can inherit a more peaceful and just future. You can imagine the profound experience and exhilaration I had when on my return to New York one of the first letters that I opened was your invitation.

Humanity's entry into the 21st century has been both painful and dangerous. In particular, terrorism and the "war on terror" that followed, made clear to us that our destinies are linked and our lives intertwined. Global security more than ever is linked with national and human security. The fear and violence that now characterize our world demonstrate, especially after the invasion of Iraq, that no one country, agency or sector of society, however powerful, can alone ensure global peace and human security. The common goals, norms and standards that we develop to guide our interactions with each other whether as states or local communities, organizations or individuals are the best, and maybe the only, guarantors of human security.

As shown most clearly by the history of Afghanistan over the last three decades, the intertwining forces of internal and external conflict and social and gender injustice undermine the capacity of countries to move towards sustainable peace and development and threaten global peace and security. If we are to find just and equitable responses to the great challenges of this era and increase all forms of human security economic, political, and social then those who are most affected by insecurities and injustices must be involved in finding solutions. Decision makers must take into account current problems of injustice at every level, as well as people's own solutions to them. Because some of the most entrenched social, economic, political, and cultural injustices are endured by women, half of the world's population, it is necessary to make their voices heard, their perspectives visible, and their solutions legitimate; they must become leaders of communities and institutions, with the power to shape policies and agendas. In an increasingly insecure world, the vision of women who advocate for peace and justice must finally come to the fore as the dominant, rather than the alternative, perspective. Unless we take seriously the theme of the United Nations Women's World Conferences, "Equality, Development and Peace," we are going to lose out on the possibility of long-term peace and stability.

In this lecture dedicated to the memory of Dag Hammarskjöld, I would like to address how the United Nations has been engaged and, indeed, challenged, by women around the world to urgently and effectively respond to the realities, needs, and priorities of women in situations of conflict. Specifically, I will consider how women, based on their experiences of war and conflict, have mobilized for the formulation and adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, an agreed upon mechanism by which to ensure that women's rights are protected during conflict, and their participation is supported at all stages and levels of peace-making, peace-keeping, and peace-building.

I shall first examine some of the root causes of conflict, as well as the forms of mobilization taken by various groups in these contexts. I will then look at how the nature of warfare has changed, the impact of contemporary conflict on women's lives, and the role of the United Nations in establishing, in accordance with international norms and standards, frameworks and processes for bringing about an end to violence, enhanced protection, the realization of justice, and broad-based peace-building for women and men affected by conflict.

I will then examine some of the issues that resolution 1325 helped open up for analysis: protection of women during war, ensuring women's participation in peace processes, and the challenge of building the foundations of justice during post-conflict reconstruction. I will look at some of the work that UNIFEM has done and is doing to support the implementation of this landmark resolution. In conclusion, I will consider some of the gaps that remain, and suggest some ways forward in our mission for peace, justice, and dignity for all people.

[b]The Roots of Conflict and Political Mobilization [/b]

Before addressing the specific challenges posed by women's experience in war and conflict, we need to understand better the roots of current conflicts, and the dynamics that perpetuate them, so that these can be seriously addressed in efforts to prevent or end conflict. Today, we know that every major conflict involves an interaction between economic, political, historical,

and cultural factors. Some conflicts arise when groups of people feel economically or politically deprived, others arise when people have their lands or natural resources taken away from them, or their control. Patterns of economic and political governance that perpetuate and reproduce inequalities and exclusion often fuel political mobilization. In many cases, group mobilization often occurs along lines of ethnic, religious or ideological identity, enhanced by sharp inequalities and various forms of exclusion.

Wars produce winners and losers, at global, regional, and local levels, with costs and benefits unequally shared. Wars permit marginalized groups and individuals to be employed as soldiers; they promote transnational production and trade in arms, trafficking in drugs, diamonds, and other resources. They also create the conditions for the trafficking of women, children, and men. Where economic opportunities are few and not able to provide for decent livelihoods, the possibilities of enrichment by war are considerable, including opportunities to loot, and to profit from shortages and aid. For certain people, conflict is more profitable than peace, and violence provides a real alternative for those marginalized under present arrangements which they perceive as inequitable and unjust. It is not only the disadvantaged groups, however, that resort to violence to further their cause; privileged groups, including states, also wage brutal campaigns against political adversaries.

In many cases, however, political mobilization for war is based on lived realities of injustice. In situations where official policies, institutions, and leaders have failed to provide equal security, opportunity, and dignity, a sense of injustice and desperation prevails among certain sections of the population. Under such circumstances, engaging in group mobilization can be a form or process of empowerment, enabling people who feel themselves victims of injustice to become part of a collective movement, with the conviction and hope that they are taking their lives and destinies into their own hands. In conflict societies, where the majority of people are robbed of their capacity to shape the conditions of their lives, political mobilization can be an act of collective self-determination, an attempt by ordinary people to reclaim ownership and direction over their own lives, sometimes even through violent means.