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PEACE INEXTRICABLY LINKED WITH EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN SAYS SECURITY COUNCIL, IN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY STATEMENT

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The following statement on the occasion of International Women's Day was issued today by the President of the Security Council, Anwarul Karim Chowdhury (Bangladesh), on behalf of the Council:

As the first International Women's Day of the new millennium is observed throughout the world, members of the Security Council recognize that peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men. They affirm that the equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. In this context, members welcome the review of the Fourth World Conference on Women as an essential element in achieving this goal.

Members of the Council also recognize that while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict, women and girls are particularly affected. The impact of violence against women and violation of the human rights of women in conflict situations is experienced by women of all ages. Women also constitute the majority of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons.

Members of the Council note that although women have begun to play an important role in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peace-building, they are still under-represented in decision-making in regard to conflict. If women are to play an equal part in security and maintaining peace,

they must be empowered politically and economically, and represented adequately at all levels of decision-making, both at the pre-conflict stage and during hostilities, as well as at the point of peacekeeping, peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction.

Members of the Council also note that during times of armed conflict and the collapse of communities, the role of women is crucial in preserving social order, and as peace educators both in their families and in their societies, thereby playing an important role in fostering a culture of peace in strife-torn communities and societies.

Members of the Council call upon all concerned to refrain from human rights abuses in conflict situations, often in gender-specific ways, respect international humanitarian law and to promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and a culture of peace.

Members of the Council recall the obligation to prosecute those responsible for grave breaches of international humanitarian law, while welcoming the inclusion as a war crime, in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), of all forms of sexual violence and noting the role the Court could play to ending impunity for perpetrators of such crimes.

Members of the Council stress that efforts should be strengthened to provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women in conflict situations.

Members of the Council underscore the importance of promoting an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes while addressing armed or other conflicts.

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