

France will host conference “Beijing +25” in a year’s time

Opening of the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women Speech by Ms. Marlène Schiappa, Minister of State for Gender Equality and the Fight against Discrimination and President of the Security Council for the month of March 2019

General Assembly – 11 March 2019

First of all, like all of you, my thoughts are with the families of the victims of the air tragedy just mentioned; I pay tribute to the memory of the victims.

Madam President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies, dear colleagues,

It is an honor for me, **as president of the UN Security Council**, to address the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

I would first of all like to thank the UN secretary-general, the president of the UN General Assembly and the president of ECOSOC for their very inspirational speeches.

The theme chosen by the Commission this year is of critical importance. Almost 25 years after the Beijing Conference, as well as its Declaration and Program of Action, most of the 4 billion people without social protection are in fact women and girls. In addition, all too often, social protection measures are inadequate. I hope that together we will be able to find an ambitious solution to this problem.

I would like first of all to express my support for the efforts of the secretary-general and UN Women to achieve genuine gender equality and promote the empowerment of women, as well as the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, both within the UN system and beyond.

Secondly, while bearing the respective mandates in mind, the Security Council has a key role to play in ensuring the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, as well as all Security Council resolutions relevant to this issue. The year 2020 will mark the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, providing each of us with the opportunity to strengthen our efforts in order to guarantee the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in political and peace processes at all levels, as well as the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

This is one of the priorities of France and Germany’s twin presidencies of the Security Council in March and April.

The challenges associated with women’s participation and their protection, including through the prevention of and fight against impunity, are now an integral part of the Security Council’s work, its meetings – not just during the annual debates but also during the sessions devoted to the different conflict areas – and its output – relating to 70% of its resolutions and 90% of its presidential statements. This participation is translated into tangible action on the ground, through the provision of expertise on gender issues and the gradual deployment of female peacekeepers within peacekeeping operations. More generally, 76 national action plans and

11 regional plans have been developed in order to implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

But additional efforts are needed and the Security Council must continue to take concrete measures.

The level of women's participation in political and peace processes remains very weak, even though we know that their participation makes peace more sustainable. This is of course an issue that concerns the diplomatic world: over the last 25 years, women accounted for only 2% of mediators and 8% of negotiators.

In addition, women and girls have all too often been the target of violence, particularly sexual violence, in armed conflict or post-conflict situations. We utterly condemn these acts. We note with deep concern that no fewer than 51 groups were identified in the secretary-general's 2018 thematic report and that, for example, no individuals associated with Daesh or Boko Haram have been brought to justice for acts of sexual violence, while these terrorist acts are widespread and systematic. The Security Council will continue to address this issue and will closely examine the secretary-general's next report in the next few weeks.

I would now like to say a few words in my national capacity.

Gender equality is no longer an option. It is no longer an issue that is discussed at the end of meetings if there is enough time left. Thanks to a collective commitment, it has become a major cross-cutting issue in its own right: education, health, work, peace, the economy, innovation, climate.... That's why France has been creating new momentum over the past year: a true feminist diplomacy, in order to ensure that gender equality becomes a major global cause.

That's why France will host a major conference entitled "Beijing +25" in a year's time under UN auspices.

France is actively campaigning to universalize the Istanbul Convention. I solemnly call on all states that would like to adopt these standards on the fight against gender-based and sexual violence to ratify the Istanbul Convention.

Being more effective in 2019 means working toward improved access to education all over the world, for girls as well as boys. It also means working toward the economic empowerment of women, notably in Africa and the Sahel. In order to achieve this, we will create a special bank to support female entrepreneurship there. France has also created a €120 million endowment fund aimed at supporting feminist movements and NGOs, especially in the countries of the South.

Last week, President Macron awarded the Simone Veil Prize of the French Republic to Aissa Doumara, a Cameroonian citizen who is working courageously to combat early marriage and all violence against women. In this respect, I would like, from this rostrum at the UN, to address a message of sisterhood and support on behalf of France to all courageous female activists who are campaigning, often at the price of their own freedom, like Nasrin Sotoudeh, the Iranian currently in prison whom Emmanuel Macron has appointed to G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council.

In 2019, the world continues to mistreat half of humanity. In the worst-case scenarios, this half of humanity is sold, forced to marry, mutilated, raped, locked up, and objectified. But in practice no country in the world guarantees this half of humanity perfect equality. Even in the best of cases, this half of humanity is paid less, does more household chores, suffers more harassment on social media, is more discredited. We can no longer be satisfied with the least objectionable scenario, anywhere in the world.

Being a feminist means not tolerating for the daughters of others what we would not tolerate for our own daughters. France has a dual responsibility this year, at the UN and at the G7: It is often said that France is the country of human rights. France wants, together with all of you and for them, to become the country of women's rights.

Thank you.