Statement by
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At the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security:
Promoting the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security
Agenda and sustaining peace through women’s political and
economic empowerment.

October 25th 2018.
Mr. President,

1. I congratulate Bolivia on its presidency of the Security Council this month, and I thank you for organizing today’s debate. It is not a surprise that Bolivia has chosen the theme: ‘Promoting the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and sustaining peace through women’s political and economic empowerment’, given Bolivia’s achievements and commitment towards inclusiveness and gender equality. It is a pleasure to recall that Bolivia has the third highest percentage of women in parliament in the world, after Cuba and Rwanda.

2. I also thank the Secretary General, the Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN WOMEN, Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah, for their statements and informative briefings this morning.

Mr. President,

3. The Security Council has passed several resolutions focused on women’s political and economic empowerment, and women’s increased participation in efforts aimed at ending conflict. Indeed, since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we now have a comprehensive framework expressed in four pillars: prevention, participation, protection, and recovery. This debate gives us an opportunity to take stock of the progress made and to discuss concrete measures we need to take collectively to ensure a more meaningful participation of women in peace and security, not because it looks good but because the meaningful participation of women in the prevention, mediation, and resolution of conflicts and in negotiation of peace agreements is the only way to resolve conflicts durably and speed post-conflict recovery. We know that in addition to carrying the heaviest human burden of conflicts, and therefore have the highest incentive for peace and must be part of any peace processes.
Mr. President,

4. In the immediate aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and as the Great Lakes region was mired in instability, my country faced an insurgency that threatened to spoil the reconstruction and national cohesion efforts that were underway. To deal with this threat, the Rwandan Government turned to the women whose relatives had joined the insurgents; In an innovative program called ‘come and see, go and tell’. These women would act as emissaries to reach out to their brothers, their husbands, and their relatives who had joined the insurgency and make a case for them to return home. They took ownership of the program and the brave actions of these women were vital to the successful disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants.

5. Another measure that substantively contributed to conflict prevention in Rwanda is the revision of inheritance law and land reform. This has ensured equal rights to access and ownership of land for women and men. As a result, today in Rwanda, more women than men own land titles and land related conflicts have drastically dropped. Impact assessments of the land reform have also shown that land owned by women has contributed significantly to the economic empowerment of families and local communities.

6. Mr. President, it is important to recognize the importance of homegrown solutions and traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. Wherever conflict breaks out, the social fabric breaks down. With it go the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. However, efforts must be made to involve the guardians of peace, who are usually elders and women in the society, in reviving these mechanisms. This would ensure ownership among the community and increase the chances of
successfully resolving conflicts. Any foreign support should complement and build on these local and homegrown solutions.

Mr. President,

7. Women’s meaningful participation in the social and political life in Rwanda has reaped dividends of peace and social and economic gains. We see the clear link between the pillars of prevention, participation, protection, and recovery. It follows that women’s participation in conflict prevention necessitates their participation at the decision-making table where policies and laws are crafted. This required the full involvement of women at all levels of governance. Last week the President of the Republic appointed for the first time in Rwanda’s history, a fully gender-balanced cabinet. This builds on Rwanda’s already exemplary track record of women’s empowerment in other sectors, for instance: women occupy 61% of seats in the Rwandan Parliament, 50% of Rwanda’s judges are women, and 50% of provincial governors are women. While the Rwandan Constitution set a minimum quota of 30% for women representation in decision making organs, the results delivered by women in all sectors earned them the trust of the population and constituencies they serve.

8. Women’s full participation has been central to the tremendous recovery of Rwanda. We can truly say that Rwandan women lawmakers, judges, medical workers, soldiers, police, community leaders, and women in all sectors, have been the backbone of Rwanda’s ongoing social and economic transformation. The resilience of this country that was once considered doomed to perpetual conflict is a testament to political leadership that recognized from the start, the inevitable necessity of having women’s full and meaningful participation in all affairs of the
country. Women’s participation has now become ingrained in our way of life. And it is with this humble experience that I will conclude with few recommendations.

Mr. President,

9. For us to advance gender equality and empower women both politically and economically, and in the context of peace and security and post-conflict recovery, there are a few steps that we must take:

1. We need to establish more and make effective use of existing platforms to share best practices such as FemWise-Africa and the African Women Leaders Network. We should then encourage the duplication of these best practices, of course while tailoring them to suit local contexts. Regional and global institutions are particularly essential to make this work, and the United Nations and its relevant agencies should be at the forefront of these efforts.

2. For a meaningful and successful implementation of the WPS agenda, we need to do a better job at assessing and holding ourselves accountable, for progress on the field and at the UN Headquarters. A specific and simple measure will be to introduce the assessment of progress with the implementation of WPS Agenda as part of the performance assessment of all heads of UN peacekeeping and political missions.

I thank you for your kind attention.