Statement by
Ambassador Valentine Rugwabiza, Permanent Representative of Republic of Rwanda to the United Nations

At the Security Council High Level Open Debate
On

“Towards the successful implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda: Moving from commitments to accomplishments”

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Madam President,

1. I congratulate South Africa on its successful presidency of the Security Council for last month; I thank you for organizing this open debate. I also congratulate the United Kingdom on their presidency for November and accepting to proceed with this important agenda on WPS from last month. I also thank all briefers for their enlightening briefings.

2. This open debate comes at an opportune time to reflect on the achievements, challenges, and the remaining work ahead on issues related to the women, peace & security agenda, as we mark 10 years since the establishment of the Office of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in conflict, and ahead of the 20th anniversary since the adoption of resolution 1325.

3. The women, peace and security issues are a core foundation of lasting peace. The full implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, involves meaningful participation in the full spectrum of conflict mediation,
conflict resolution, negotiations of peace agreements and peace building.

4. Since the adoption of resolution 1325 in 2000, 19 related resolutions were adopted, similarly highlighting the suffering that women face as a result of armed conflict and recognizing that women carry the heaviest burdens of conflicts.

5. Unfortunately, in spite of all these resolutions, atrocities against women and girls in armed conflicts have continued. Today’s wars continue to be fought on women’s bodies in acts of terror with the aim of destroying beyond recovery, the social fabric of targeted communities.

**Madam President,**

6. There remains a lot of work for us all to advance women’s empowerment in the area of peace and security. In this respect I would like to make the following recommendations:

   1) Political will of member states, the UN Secretariat and commitment of all parties to a conflict is critical to create the necessary environment for meaningful women
participation. It is particularly hard to understand the absence of women in negotiations for peace agreements supported by the UN as was reported earlier today in the briefing of the UN Women Executive Director.

2) The women, peace and security agenda should be central in all peacekeeping missions with protection of civilians’ mandates. Effective implementation calls for increased investment in WPS advisors in peacekeeping missions and regular reporting. Protection of civilians is and will continue to be the driver of Rwanda’s engagement in UN peacekeeping. As the 3rd top troop contributing country, we are fully committed to the WPS agenda in UN peace operations.

3) It is essential to raise awareness and build the capacities of local communities as they are the first line of response to conflict-related sexual violence. During Rwanda’s reconstruction period, the role of local communities was central to effective prevention, timely reporting and accountability.
4) Focus on survivors’ centered approach; there is need to reinforce protection and rehabilitation of victims/survivors of sexual abuse in armed conflicts by providing services which include medical care, psychosocial support, security/protection of victims, and legal aid. In this regard, we commend the Ms. Pramila Patten, SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict for putting the focus on survivors during last week’s event to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the mandate on sexual violence in conflict. We welcome the launch the Global Fund for Survivors of conflict related violence by Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Nadia Murad and encourage more members to support the fund.

5) Supporting countries in need with strengthening legal and policy framework that advances the rights of women and children is vital. Prevention of sexual violence starts with strong institutions and comprehensive legal frameworks during times of peace. Holding perpetrators of sexual violence to account is crucial to deliver justice to victims and to deter future crimes.
6) At national levels, it is vital to adopt and implement national policies, national actions plans, and make efforts within regional frameworks aimed at raising public awareness of women’s rights and the importance of their role and participation in peace processes, the resolution and prevention of armed conflict, and peacebuilding.

7) Supporting women’s economic empowerment and capacity building to equip them with the skills necessary to their meaningful participation in all aspects of peacebuilding and national building.

7. All these aspects, best political practices and investment models will be considered during the upcoming Global Gender Summit to be held in Kigali, Rwanda from 25 – 27 November 2019. The summit will run under the theme “unpacking constraints to gender equality”.

Madam President,

8. In conclusion, we have the instruments to implement all aspects of resolution 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda. We have seen setbacks in peace
agreements and peacebuilding processes which were not inclusive of women. We have also seen lasting peace and development progress in countries where women are central and equal partners in the maintenance of peace, security and development. Rwanda is a case in point. The task before us is to leverage the necessary political will and courage for a more ambitious implementation. Rwanda remains committed to the implementation of the WPS agenda. Conflict-related sexual violence is a peace and security issues. Our ability to respond to CRSV will define our ability to give meaning to the maintenance of international peace and security for the millions of victims, survivors and communities at risk.

I thank you for your kind attention