



**Women's Foreign Policy Group
United Nations Study Visit
New York, NY
May 1, 2008**

Session II: The Crucial Role of Women in Rebuilding Society after Conflict

Kathleen Cravero

UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery and Chair of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict

Gillian Sorensen: I am particularly pleased to welcome Kathleen Cravero to this meeting. I said earlier that Alex Wolff is the quintessential career Foreign Service Officer; I can say here that Kathleen Cravero is the quintessential United Nations career international civil servant. She has had a really remarkable career working with UNICEF, with the World Health Organizations, with the United Nations Development Programme. Her own background is in political science and public health. I want to read her title carefully, because it has a very comprehensive description. She is UN Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, and is Chair of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. She's been a champion on issues related to women, women and girls, women and children. She has been to all parts of the world. She has spent, particularly, a number of years in the African continent. Kathleen, we welcome you here, look forward to your comments and hope you will take some questions.

Kathleen Cravero: Thank you very much. Gillian, you're the quintessential UN civil servant. You've certainly always been a role model for me. I want to thank you for the opportunity to talk with you. I noticed that many of the other UN speakers are going to talk to you about the parts of the UN they work for. I'm taking a slightly different tack in that I really wanted to take this opportunity with this group to talk about not UNDP per se or even crisis prevention and recovery in a global sense although I'm very happy to take whatever questions you have on that but I wanted to focus on the state of the art, so to speak, of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325. In doing so I want to express to you what we think inside the UN might be holding us back from making that resolution real for millions of women and girls worldwide and in doing so, express a couple of deeply-held concerns that I have personally and that I know are shared.

THE PROBLEM

Let me start by stating there is no doubt that the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 was a ground-breaking event. I don't know how many of you have actually read it

through – it's called the Security Council Resolution on Women Peace and Security and it was adopted about eight years ago now. So it's quite a long time. It was the first time any such resolution was adopted. It's reviewed every year in the third week of October. The Security Council does a review of where we are in pushing this forward. Let me just state why it is so significant and what Security Council Resolution 1325 says. It recognizes the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in peace building. It does this with unprecedented clarity and for the first time, certainly by recognition by the Security Council. It calls for increased decision-making for women at all levels; enhanced participation in peace processes; and greater gender-sensitivity in mediation, training and protection measures. It calls for intensified efforts to reduce sexual and other violence against women and for an end to impunity for those who commit these crimes. It is a stronger and clearer call to action than we ever imagined possible for women and girls before the resolution was adopted.

Unfortunately, every year when we go over its implementation, we fall far short. It's clear that we could be doing a lot more. There are two general concerns I have on that and then I just want to review for you what I think are five myths that might be holding us back.

The first of my own concerns is the impersonal, distanced approach we take to the problem of women in war. Such large numbers of women experiencing such unprecedented, unspeakable brutality. It's overwhelming and we lose sight sometimes I think that each one of these women is an individual with feelings, hopes and dreams. She is a mother, sister, daughter, friend – and she is mostly young and afraid. If you want to get a real clear idea about the situation of women in war, I recommend to you a book that was sponsored by UNIFEM and it's by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf – who you all know is now the President of Liberia – entitled *Women, War and Peace*. The reason why I think it's significant is that it really sees the problems of women in war through the experiences of individual women.

In that work, Rehn they examine a number of important issues, but they do so through the eyes of individual women: Lorenca, raped repeatedly in East Timor; Larissa, sold as a sex slave in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Lina, with no access to services in post-conflict Liberia; Sara, captured at 14 years old by the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, who said: "Every day felt like a year to me... I feel like an old woman now, no one will ever want me, I will never love."

The second concern I have is maybe best expressed by a quote by Mark Twain, who said: "It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so." In other words, despite our best intentions, our efforts to address the problems of women in war and post-conflict may be missing the mark. We talk about what to do. We write about how to do it. But why aren't we making a difference? Why is it that every year when we go to the Security Council to review the implementation of 1325 we fall so far short? And as I said the answer might lie within Mark Twain's point that maybe what we're so sure of "just ain't so".

I'd like to express five myths I think that exist when we talk about women in war and that may be holding us back from full implementation of this path-breaking resolution and from doing things that are significant for women and girls caught in war

THE MYTHS

MYTH # 1: Gender-based Violence is an Inevitable Consequence of War

The chaos and disruption of war are unsettling. Gender violence often increases. Improving access to justice and helping survivors recover must continue to be priorities.

Yet the unprecedented levels of violence against women that has occurred in recent conflicts – described by some as reaching “epidemic proportions” – is not inevitable. We know that we can reduce gender-based violence; there are security and protection mechanisms that do protect women and girls. In Darfur, when there were joint patrols of the Sudanese police and the African Union troops to accompany women when they looked for firewood the number of rapes reduced significantly. When it was decided that we no longer could afford to have those patrols accompanying women looking for firewood, the number of rapes skyrocketed. This is not evidence we're waiting for, this is clear evidence.

Fuel-efficient stoves in the camps for internally displaced persons (IDP) reduce the number of times women have to go looking for firewood. Alternative income-generating activities make collecting firewood less necessary. And we know that these kinds of measures reduce risk. They are not complicated, we know how to do them, and there should be money to do them. Yet, somehow they fall by the wayside.

We also know that security institutions matter. A police force trained to understand and respond to sexual violence will increase reporting and the enforcement of sanctions. Security forces that include women will have the same effect. We are seeing that now in India's recent decision to send an all-female group of military police to the UN Mission in Liberia – incredible difference that this police force is having in getting reports of rapes and responding to them. So I would conclude that gender-based violence is not an inevitable consequence of war.

MYTH # 2: Women are Vulnerable and Need Help and Protection

Of course women and girls need help and protection. But if vulnerability was the defining characteristic of women, there would be a very few women left in post-conflict situations. The fact is that women play multiple roles during and after conflict – as combatants, supporters of armed groups, community peacebuilders and peace advocates.

Examples abound:

During the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, women drew maps to help each other locate community services, ran clandestine schools for girls, provided health care and set up

home-based work to support their families.

In Serbia, women played a vital role in the overthrow of a murderous regime.

In post-genocide Rwanda, women organized a cross-ethnic women's umbrella organization, worked on rebuilding communities and advocated for gender equality measures in the new Constitution.

In post-apartheid South Africa, women demanded comprehensive security sector reform, including civilian control over the military and affirmative action based on race and sex.

Women's roles as positive forces of change are often over-looked and under-supported. Women are resilient; they are survivors.

While this does not mean that we should exploit their resilience, which often happens by saying that women can cope so women can wait, but it does suggest that women should not be looked at primarily a vulnerable group – they can and must be mobilized as positive forces when it comes to recovery and consolidation of peace.

MYTH # 3: Seats at the Table Are Enough

Promoting women's participation and leadership in peace agreements and post-conflict recovery is an important first step. The sheer presence of women can initiate profound change in certain situations. But, contrary to widespread belief, seats at the table are not enough.

Why? Because too often women lack the capacity to use these seats effectively. After decades of exclusion they need support to find their voice, to articulate positions, to mobilize constituencies. Women must be equipped to operate in this new and unfamiliar political "space".

The strengthened capacity of women also needs to be complemented by institutional change – from political parties to ministries to parliaments. We need to make post-conflict institutions "gender-friendly" and supportive of a wider range of actors, including women.

So yes, women need seats at the table. But they also need help in using these seats in government institutions that are able and willing to deliver for all their citizens.

MYTH # 4: Justice Reforms Will Benefit Women

Restoring the rule of law in the aftermath of conflict is a critical first step to delivering justice. But the approaches used in this effort – rather than the effort itself – will determine the impact on women.

What would it take to ensure justice for the women I mentioned earlier? What would

constitute “access to justice” for Lorenca and Sara, whose lives were destroyed by war then by rape?

Women face special obstacles when it comes to accessing justice. Their rights are often missing from legal frameworks. Even when recognized these rights are often ignored by justice officials or traditional justice systems.

In the words of Janet from Liberia, also in Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf's book, she says, “I work this land every day. I know each and every hill and rock as well as I know my children. How dare anyone tell me that this land belongs to my dead husband's brother?”

A comprehensive set of interventions is required to correct this situation. Women need to know what their rights are, e.g., through legal aid and literacy. They need to be able to access legal systems, e.g., through free legal services. They need to be able to enforce laws that protect their rights and, once enforced, they need to be able to live in their communities without harassment and without retribution. In the case of Janet, she needs to know that she has a right to her land; she needs affordable, accessible legal help in defending this right; the ruling of the court needs enforcement; and finally, she needs to be able to live on her land once justice is served.

So justice reforms are critically important but they won't necessarily reach or help women, unless they are expressly designed to do so.

MYTH # 5: Peace Will Ensure Gender Equality

Peace agreements represent unique “windows of opportunity” – for inclusiveness, for democratic reform and, not least, for gender equality. But opportunities must be seized; potential must be realized.

The first step is to include gender provisions in peace agreements, and we've seen this being done in Burundi, Guatemala, Liberia, and even Somalia various peace agreements that have been signed there.

But it's a much more significant step to go from the provisions that are in these peace agreements to actual implementation of these provisions. The National Charter of Somalia, for instance, is a best case example in terms of women's rights. But most of the commitments in the National Charter the ones related to women have never been implemented, and this is true for Burundi and Guatemala as well.

So, yes, we must bring women to the peace table. We must support and promote women's activism both in informal dialogue and in peace processes. But we must also recognize that the implementation of peace agreements is what makes participation meaningful. Only then can peace move us closer to gender equality.

And we see another very current example is Nepal. As a result of the recent elections, one-third of the people elected in Nepal, one-third, are women. Now what's the future for

Nepal in that sense? Are we going to reach out and support and capacitate these women to lead Nepal in a different direction? Are we going to make sure that whatever comes out of a new constitution for Nepal puts them first in that gets implemented, or is this just going to be another missed opportunity? We certainly are thinking about that in the UN agencies.

THE WAY FORWARD

If these five myths are blocking progress, how do we get past them? And I just close by saying that one of the ways we're trying to get past them in the United Nations Development Programme is through something we've developed called the eight point agenda for women's empowerment and gender equality in crisis prevention and recovery.

Just to give you a quick idea, because gender based violence can be prevented, one of the themes, the **first** point of the eight-point agenda is strengthen Women's Security in Crisis

Through reducing personal and institutional violence against women, through strengthening the rule of law, through increasing the gender responsiveness of security institutions, and through making sure that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives recognize both women's strengths and their special needs.

Second, because women face special obstacles in accessing justice, we will:

Advance Gender Justice in very specific ways

Including promoting women's rights economically, politically, socially, and culturally making sure that when institutions are built, they're built in a way that will serve women's needs.

Third, because women can help transform societies, we will:

Expand opportunities for Women's Citizenship, Participation and Leadership

As both generally and as opportunities arise, for instance as the one I just said for Nepal, but also in Southern Sudan. Whether anyone knew what they were doing or not whether they meant to do this or not, in the constitution of Southern Sudan, 25% percent of all official institutions need to be women. So this is an enormous opportunity. And what are we doing as the UN? What are we doing collectively to make sure that this actually is realized?

Fourth, to realize the potential of peace agreements to advance gender equality, we will:

Ensure that Peace is built with and for Women

We need to make sure that there are no peace processes in which women are not only there, but capacitated to fully participate.

Fifth, because women have unique needs in the context of natural disasters, which is a little outside 1325, but we will:

Make sure women and men are involved in building back better post-disaster.

Sixth, because conflict affects women and men differently, we will:

Ensure Gender-Responsive Recovery

Seventh, we will:

Help Transform Government to Deliver for Women

And **eighth**, to ensure that both men and women can fulfill their potential as positive forces for change, we will:

Develop Capacities through direct support to women's networks and organizations on the ground by building the skills of both men and women that are willing to make this happen.

So as the UN, as the UN development agencies, this is our pledge to Lorenca, to Lina, to Sarah, to Janet and to Immaculata, who ran next to me as we both escaped an ambush when I was posted in Burundi: we will not view sexual violence as inevitable, we will not take justice for granted and we will not accept less than full engagement in peacebuilding and recovery. We will advocate – and, more importantly, we will act – to mitigate their suffering, address their concerns and build their resilience. Because these are in fact the choices we face: courage vs. fear; action vs. paralysis; hope vs. despair. We hope that the right choices are as clear to you as they are to us: COURAGE, ACTION, HOPE.

Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Gillian Sorensen: Thank you Kathleen for that presentation. I know we have lots of questions.

Question: I want to ask about how much awareness there is about 1325 outside the UN and government circles and if the answer is “not very much” is there any kind of global education program to reach out to people on the ground.

Ms. Cravero: I know that UNIFEM has been working hard on this. What we found is that when we try to go public with 1325 it is almost overwhelming because people can't relate to the magnitude of it. One of the reasons we started 12 agencies of which I have the privilege to be chair for this year, started “Stop Rape Now” UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. That draws people in because everyone can recognize the unspeakable brutality being visited on women is unprecedented in history. You know

Attila the Hun actually didn't do these things that are happening to women in the DRC. People say, you know, this has always happened, it actually hasn't happened in the way it's going on now. So we're trying through Stop Rape Now to get that word out to draw the public in and then to be able to explain the broader, more nuanced issues. And to do that, we actually have a website called www.stoprapenow.org. We actually found a very famous ad company that, pro bono, did the whole website. Of course when we started this thing we had some long UN name and the first thing they said was: I'm asleep already by the time I get to the end. So they came up with Stop Rape Now and said that that's what you need to get people's attention and to let them know what you're trying to do. So I think we're learning that we're not so good at it and I think the next phase is partnering with groups who know much better how to communicate these issues to a broader public.

Question: Kathleen, I could've listened to you all day. Your question was excellent and I would like to do the flip side of that question. You mentioned about gender-responsive change and you responded about capacity-building. I'd like to know what the accountability measures are that hold people responsible at various levels: beginning with government to the grassroots levels.

Ms. Cravero: We need help with accountability measures. I've always tried, with every job I've had in the UN, I've tried from the modest platforms I've had to build in accountability. Now, within the UN accountability program, I manage a rather large trust fund that country offices of countries in crisis can access. And we've now made a rule and the administrator has supported it that at least 15% of any requests (and I know we'll raise the stakes) has to be related to debunking one of these myths or implementing the eight-point agenda, or related to Resolution 1325, very explicitly with monitoring and targets so we're going to find out whether it made any difference for women. But that's sort of inside my organization.

On the ground, with country offices, we've actually hired three full-time people, taking them from other areas, reallocating posts (which was quite a controversial issue when I did it). And their whole job is to help country offices come up with specific support action related to 1325 and then, how do you help international partners measure whether there's any positive outcome for women on the ground.

Where we really need help is within these hallowed halls. We've been asking the Security Council to come up with some very specific accountability measures but it always ends up getting voted down or vetoed. Even now with peace missions, we've asked that every mission has to report to the Security Council when it gets its mandate renewed (at least once every six months). We've actually formed a little SWAT team of the different people in the agencies that has spread out to the member states that are on the Security Council now and have made sure that every time a mandate comes up it gets strong language about sexual reporting. One of our goals is to get a global report every year of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on reporting, specifically on sexual violence, but also on other measures related to 1325.

We keep getting told that there is enough reporting and reporting doesn't help.

Absolutely, reporting in and of itself doesn't help anything. But I always say so when you talk about data gathering, value what women count and count what women value. Yes, the reporting: statisticians will rip it apart, it's very unscientific, it has got all sorts of holes in it. But the point is, if you count it, it's important. That's the bottom line in this world. What we're pushing for is some obligation for UN missions, for the Security Council maybe not to count – there's a lot of debate over incident counting on violence against women – but there's many different things you could actually monitor and we're not anywhere near it yet. So I think there are things that we can do programmatically, as UN agencies, and there are actions that member states have to take politically.

Question: Pam Pelletreau. I would ask that the Women's Foreign Policy Group ask you whether it would be possible to make a transcript of our remarks available to its membership. (*Patricia Ellis, President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group says, "We will be."*). This is in-house but if you could add to it some of these forward-looking ideas you have, you'll get a pretty wide public here.

Ms. Cravero: That would be great and we could maybe partner in some way in getting the word out. That's why I didn't want to waste the opportunity.

Question: In 1997 there was passed a resolution to reach gender parity within the UN in senior positions. And it's been over 10 years now and there is little progress and what do you have to say about it? And we've never had a woman Secretary-General.

Ms. Cravero: So far! I know it's a concern of the Secretary-General. Certainly in UNDP it's every quarter an administrator monitors the recruitment of women, the balance at different levels of the organization. And I know that the Secretary-General is encouraging all the executive heads to do that. So, yes, we haven't made enough progress. I actually think there's a will there. We've made more progress in some areas than others but I can only say that all of us in house are pushing in this direction.

Question: Regarding the war in Afghanistan, how is the administration working with the UN to gain the kind of improvement that you are talking about in this area?

Ms. Cravero: Just in Darfur, actually the UN Development Programme has been supporting for the last four years, what I consider – and I can say this because it's my organization and I had nothing to do with starting it – one of the most remarkable rule of law programs I've ever experienced. It actually provides legal aid services at very grassroots levels to women in Darfur and it really has done significant work in sending a message that there is rule of law and you can't just do anything you want to women. There won't be impunity for rape and sexual violence and I can make a description of that program available to the group. So that's one that I know, in Darfur, that's been extremely important. And there was a lot of work in the peace agreement that unfortunately didn't hold. But when that peace process was going on, UNIFEM and others were doing quite a bit to make sure that Darfurian women were involved in that and I think we will continue to do that.

Same thing in Afghanistan, I think UNICEF is doing very significant work in trying to get women in education as well as, and I think we have to do more of this, support and capacitate women's networks and organizations on the ground. There actually are remarkable women's organizations in Darfur and Afghanistan but as the UN we sometimes have a hard time because they're too small and too under the radar. Some of these organizations only need a few thousand dollars to really scale up. So I think that as the UN, we can be creating an environment at the national and provincial level that allows these organizations to flourish and then try to partner them with non-governmental organizations – foreign or national that can help them grow and develop. Because the most remarkable thing is to see women take recovery and peacebuilding into their own hands.

Question: (*Patricia Ellis, President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group*) I'm just wondering how concerned you are about the impact the food crisis is going to have on women and possibly increasing violence. I mean, women are so involved in agriculture. I'm just wondering if this is something you're thinking about and thinking of doing anything about.

Ms. Cravero: It's enormously worrying and I think both for climate change and for the food crisis: obviously FAO and WFP and the UN climate change group in Bonn are doing lots of research and analyses, particularly most recently on the food crisis. What we're trying to do is act as an advocate group to make sure that both women's vulnerabilities and women's role in responding to the crisis is fully recognized. I don't know if you've read, but there's now a UN-World Bank group that's been set up etc. We're trying to insist that that group has very senior gender expertise, that UNIFEM be fully involved, and that the appropriate groups and people be present. As I said, and I want to emphasize this always: women have special needs and vulnerabilities, recognize those, but they also have special strengths and contributions and those need to be fully exploited, so we're trying to make sure both things happen. But there's no doubt that women are going to be hit especially hard by the food crisis and also by climate change and that was not fully recognized in Bali in our view.

Question: (*Donna Constantinople*) Mine is more a comment and I will say that we're really honored that you gave such a strong presentation to us today. The Women's Foreign Policy Group is a great forum for this because we are being sought now by a lot of the foreign ministers who are women and we're starting to see the results of more numbers of senior women. And it strikes me that, we just had a very small, incredible dinner, at the Omani Ambassador's residence – she is the only woman from an Arab country. But there are many more who are asking our group to talk with them about the issues. It strikes me that this paper in their hands so that when they come to Washington, and even in New York, for them to be aware of this particular program. They almost feel, at least in the sessions that we've had, and as you know we honored Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf a couple of years ago at our Annual Luncheon. So we're really thinking that this is a wonderful arena for us to have a role in – particularly also, our mentoring program for young women. Because, to the extent we can raise awareness of all this is really part of our mission. I just wanted to thank you for this and tell you that this is something we

should work with you in tandem about in the future.

Ms. Cravero: I think that's a great idea. I'd love to partner in getting the word out more broadly. As I said, I can make my remarks available and maybe we could then work together as to how they could be packaged in a way that you could actually be giving to people that you meet and getting these discussions started.

Question: (*Donna Constantinople*) There are corporations as well. You can't overlook that private sector side. Because many of our members do come out of the corporate world and they have these foundations. I know of one at least that has singled out women and young women as their mission and so knitting that together seems to me a good idea.

Ms. Sorensen: I'd like to ask you to clarify something. You said that rape as a weapon of war is not inevitable and something has changed in these times that has made it much more prevalent than it used to be. What has happened? What has come apart? Each of these rapists is somebody's son, somebody's brother. Is it the fragmentation of community and family? Why is this a phenomenon of our time?

Ms. Cravero: I am not an anthropologist or expert on this but I think always in war there has always been opportunistic war – like pillaging and rape in war – that's always been. What we've seen much more in the last five to ten years is rape used as a strategy of war, rape actually used as part of the arsenal of how you terrorize, dilute an ethnic group, absolutely terrorize a community. And the other thing is, it's the brutality of it, actually guns shoved up women's vaginas and shot off. That's what I mean when I say I'm not really sure that Attila the Hun did those things – because everybody uses that example to me: ah you know from the Greeks, from the Romans, this has always been happening; I'm not sure *this* has always been happening. When you actually look at the details of what's happening to women now, part of it – and this is just one example of the types of analyses that need to be done – more and more in the last five years, wars have not been between national armies. They've been between warlord groups, militia groups. And it's not that armies had some sort of honor that they didn't rape, like I said opportunistic rape was always there but if there was any kind of rules of war, honor as a soldier, it's gone in a lot of the places that I visit and I experience, it's just not there. There's dehumanization of people, and of neighbors, and of victims. Women and girls bear the brunt of this I think. So I think that's one element in it.

Ms. Sorensen: We thank you very much for this very powerful and moving presentation. It gives us a lot to think about and we wish you great success in your work.

Ms. Cravero: Good and I hope we can really partner together, that would be great.

Ms. Ellis: That would be wonderful. Thank you.