

Remarks by  
*Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury*

*Former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations  
and  
Initiator of the conceptual breakthrough  
that led to adoption of UNSCR 1325  
as Security Council President in March 2000*

at the launch of Mobilizing Men as Partners for Women, Peace and Security

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I am honored to join all of you at this afternoon's launch event on "Mobilizing Men as Partners for Women, Peace and Security" at International Peace Institute (IPI). I see familiar and friendly faces amongst us. Of course, Ambassador Steinberg, the dynamic leader steering the initiative, is here to elaborate its objectives. It is a pleasure to see our distinguished moderator Sarah Taylor, a longtime collaborator on the WPS agenda. Also, I am delighted to catch up with another leader of the WPS agenda Sahana Dharmapuri, whose program "Our Secure Future" is collaborating to support today's initiative. Looking forward to her closing remarks later.

Let me begin my remarks by wishing you all an energizing "Spring Equinox" taking place later today. This is a day of planetary significance. Dare I say that our visionary event this afternoon is of immense significance to humanity.

In the first month of Bangladesh's joining the Security Council in January 2000, President Nelson Mandela was in New York to report to the Council in his capacity as the UN-mandated facilitator of Burundi Peace Process. In an informal setting, he shared with us that his efforts to include women in the peace table were not working as participating men stonewalled. Eager to hear what women want to share, he would invite them to have tea with him in the evenings after the formal meetings were over. At next morning's formal meeting, Madiba would present some ideas for discussion and men around the table started praising him for those forward-looking ideas. He alerted them by saying that those were not "my ideas", rather those were from the women whom the men are not allowing to join at the peace table. The key message here is that women add value and bring in positive perspectives to building peace keeping in mind the best interests of their society.

Women – equal half of humanity - bring a new breadth, quality and balance of vision to our common effort to move away from the cult of war towards the culture of peace. Women's equality makes our planet safe and secure.

The reports presented to the on-going 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women have underlined that unfortunately overall progress towards gender equality had been unacceptably slow, with stagnation and even regression in some areas.

Women's rights are under threat from a "backlash" of conservatism and fundamentalism around the world.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres lamented that everywhere, we still have a male-dominated culture.

My work has taken me to the farthest corners of the world and I have seen time and again the centrality of women's equality in our lives.

This realization has now become more pertinent in the midst of the ever-increasing militarism and militarization that is destroying both our planet and our people.

UN Charter has entrusted the Security Council with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. In that context, for 55 years of its existence, the Security Council found women as only helpless victims of wars and conflicts without recognizing their positive role and contribution in that process.

On 8 March 2000, as the President of the Security Council, I could mobilize it to recognize in a statement that "peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men", and affirmed the value of full and equal participation of women at all decision-making levels. That is when the seed for Resolution 1325 was sown. The resolution was finally adopted unanimously on 31 October of the same year after tough negotiations for eight months.

You all know that the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 was presented to three women peace builders from Liberia and Yemen. In its citation, the Nobel Committee referred to 1325 and asserted that "We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society."

It is a reality that politics, more so security, is a man's world. Empowered women bring important and different skills and perspectives to the policy making table in comparison to their male counterparts. The slogan of the Global Campaign on WPS which we launched in London in June 2014 reiterates "If we are serious about peace, we must take women seriously".

Patriarchy and misogyny are the dual scourges pulling back the humanity away from our aspiration for a better world to live in freedom, equality and justice.

Men and policies and institutions controlled by them have been the main perpetrators of gender inequality which is a real threat to human progress.

Feminism is about smart policy which is inclusive, uses all potentials and leaves no one behind. I am proud to be a feminist. All of us need to be. That is how we make our planet a better place to live for all.

For the two-year initiative being launched this afternoon, all of us should take the vow to profess, advocate and work to ensure feminism as our creed and as our mission.

We should always remember that without peace, development is impossible, and without development, peace is not achievable, but without women, neither peace nor development is conceivable.