

**Introductory video message by
Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury,
former Under-Secretary-General and
High Representative of the United Nations
and**

**Initiator of the UNSCR 1325
as the President of the UN Security Council**

**to kick off the international conference
on “Women at the Peace Table”**

**organized by
ESPERAS and Make Mothers Matter (MMM)
in Ypres, Belgium on 17 June 2023**

Greetings to all of you from New York, the seat of the United Nations!

My whole-hearted congratulations to ESPERAS and Make Mothers Matter for organizing this important conference on "Women at the Peace Table" in Ypres, Belgium.

The remarkable work of Make Mothers Matter for more than 75 years highlighting the power of mothers as changemakers to make the world a better place has drawn my sincerest admiration.

The core message of 1325 is an integral part of my intellectual existence and my humble contribution to a better world for each one of us.

A little more than 23 years ago, on the International Women's Day on the 8th of March in 2000, as the President of the Security Council, following extensive stonewalling and intense resistance from the permanent members, I was able to issue an agreed statement on behalf of all 15 members of the Council that formally brought to global attention the contribution women have always been making towards preventing wars and building peace.

The Council recognized in that significant, norm-setting 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 UN Security Council resolution 1325 was sown. The formal resolution followed this conceptual and political breakthrough on 31st of October of the same year with Namibia holding the Council Presidency. The unexplained silence of the Security Council for 55 long years on women's positive role was broken forever on the 8th of March 2000.

The key focus of 1325 is that women – equal half of humanity – bring in 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. Empowered women bring important and different skills and perspectives to the policy making table in comparison to their male counterparts. Women’s equality and participation make our planet safe and secure.

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.

Patriarchy and misogyny are the dual scourges pulling back humanity. Men and policies and institutions controlled by them have been the main perpetrators of gender inequality which is a real threat to human progress.

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

Feminism ensures a smart policy which is inclusive, uses all potential 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.

All the best for a productive conference.
