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## Speaking notes

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General Debate on  
*Human rights abuses as precursors of  
conflict: Parliaments as early  
responders*  
135<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly and related  
meetings  
Geneva, 24 October 2016

Mr. President,

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Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

When I started considering the question of human rights abuses as precursors of conflict, I immediately thought about the reality of violence against women and girls throughout the world.

Do we still need to remind ourselves that women's rights are human rights? And that violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations?

Every year over 43,000 women are killed by their partners or family.<sup>1</sup> And millions of other women and girls suffer domestic violence, rape, child marriage, female genital mutilation and sexual violence in conflict. Gender inequality lies at the basis of such violence.

**Let me say it loud and clear. Gender inequality is a precursor of war. And women's empowerment is a predictor of peace.**

Research shows that when the percentage of women in parliament increases, a country is less likely to use violence. And peace agreements in which women participate substantially are more sustainable.

The high prevalence of violence against women and girls is also an indicator that society is likely to resort to violence on a large scale. A society that turns a blind eye to everyday violence against women at home, on the streets, at schools and in the workplace... that is a society that normalizes violence and tolerates abuse.

Let us not be mistaken. At the root of violence within the family is a quest for power and control.

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<sup>1</sup> UNODC, Global Study on Homicide 2013,  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/Chapter\\_2-2.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/Chapter_2-2.pdf)

The evidence is out there. We know domestic violence has increased in countries that have been about to face conflict. We know that gender-based violence in conflict situations is an extension of gender-based violence that prevails at other times. This violence becomes more intense and widespread as conflict breaks out.

**As a result, we need a gender-sensitive approach to early warning, peacemaking and conflict prevention.**

First, women play a pivotal role in their communities. As such, they are in a good position to detect any risk factors, such as young people being militarized or radicalized, growing intolerance, and restrictions on women's and girls' rights. Women must therefore have channels through which they can report on these trends. Women's groups at the grassroots must be included and consulted in human rights monitoring and early warning.

Second, early warning mechanisms must include gender-specific indicators. They can include laws and practices that discriminate against women and girls; restrictions to women's freedom of movement; rates of domestic and sexual violence; and the level of impunity for such acts.

Third, we need to build a culture of equality if we are to build a culture of peace. For this, we must do three things. We must empower women and girls. We must fight impunity for gender-based violence. And we must engage men and boys. They need to be called to question the notions of masculinity that promote the use of violence, especially against women and girls.

Finally, as parliamentarians, we also have a dual responsibility to 1) ensure that women are empowered to participate in all processes; and 2) consider everything that we do through a gender lens. Even when faced with conflict, we must be determined to advance gender equality. This must be part and parcel of our conflict prevention and conflict resolution strategies. We need to be vigilant about the gender impact of our action, make sure it is not detrimental to women, and listen to what they have to say.

The good news is that we have the necessary benchmarks to inform our action. CEDAW provides valuable guidance on how to build a culture of equality, by focusing on legal frameworks, policies, social norms and practices.

We also need to apply the important UN Security Council resolutions that promote gender equality in peace and security processes, in particular resolution 1325. We need 110 per cent commitment to implementing this programme.

I will end by saying that the level of gender equality tells us how healthy our societies are, and how likely they are to remain peaceful.

I thank you for your attention.