First of all I would like to commend the efforts of the many member states and civil society groups, particularly women’s organizations, for pushing for issues of women, peace and security to be addressed by the Security Council, which led to the historic adoption of resolution 1325 in 2000.

The promise of the resolution has taken a long time to be realized, however. No doubt peace keeping missions have achieved some progress in the last seven years towards engagement and empowerment of women to contribute to peace processes. This probably came about because peace keeping missions have begun to interact with civil society organizations’ gender-related initiatives. The result has been that peace keeping forces, which often have little understanding of gender equality, have begun to gain awareness of the issues that need addressing. In addition, collaboration with women’s civil society organizations and the introduction of Gender Desks in Peace Keeping Missions, has begun to have an impact.

10 years have passed and it is important for us women who are engaged in the field working with grass roots women to talk to you today about matters which are your core business.

Areas of concern include enhancing women’s participation at all levels of decision making; their involvement in peace processes; increasing their political representation, and economic empowerment; ensuring their input in conflict prevention; and their protection from gender based violence.
There is improvement, although still very limited, on political representation and economic empowerment. This cannot all be attributed to the Security Council’s intervention. In most cases where these improvements have been realized, it has been due to the work of civil societies or individual women’s efforts.

The UN Missions have, however, increased their training for women in various different fields ranging from conflict resolution to participating in government. Collaboration between UN agencies and civil society has increased the level of women’s empowerment in some areas. However, much still needs to be done.

**Women’s Participation in Peace Processes.**

Women are still not visible at peace negotiating tables in countries where conflict is occurring despite women being the main victims of these conflicts.

Let’s look at the situation of the women in Darfur. The Security Council needs to do more to encourage the two parties (the Government and the rebel groups) to include women in their delegations to the peace table. Efforts of civil society organizations without the backing of the Security Council will not reap fruitful results as we have seen in the last three years of attempts.

**Protection:**

Having a UN Mission in a country is important but limiting their mandate diminishes the value of their presence. The mandate or UNMIS in Southern Sudan does not include protecting civilians. They are restricted mainly to monitoring conditions. This is useful, but people are killed, even in their presence. Take the case of the notorious Lords Resistance Army (LRA) in Western Equatoria, Southern Sudan. To this day, civilians are being abducted, women are raped, and children killed. We call upon the Security Council to revise and increase the mandate of UNMIS so that civilians are protected, especially women and children.

UNAMID in Darfur is fully mandated to protect civilians, but in effect, is unable to do so. Protection of civilians especially women and vulnerable groups has not been fully achieved even in the IDP camps. One important achievement, though, is the increment of the number of female peace keeping forces around the IDP
camps in Darfur. The presence of these female peace keepers has given the women more confidence, although much is still desired.

**Conflict Prevention.**

I would now like to make some specific reference to situations which, as women, we still feel that the Security Council needs to pay attention to where conflict is likely to occur and should be prevented, particularly the Referendum which is scheduled to take place in Southern Sudan on January 9th 2011. There are many indications that conflict will erupt prior to or during the referendum, such as:

- The statements coming from the president of the Government of Sudan that he will do anything to protect the UNITY of Sudan in the referendum. This is contrary to the will of the people of Southern Sudan

- The statement of the Minister of Information in the Government of National Unity to the media about alienating southern Sudanese living in the North if Southerners vote for separation. Of particular concern are Southern Sudanese women in jail in Khartoum.

- Logistical problems delaying the referendum

- Disputes over eligibility and registration of voters

- Disputes over how to deal with results, whether separation or unity.

**The conditions which are most important in generating conflict are:**

- Presence of armed groups and weapons

- Media incitement

- Military build up especially around oil rich areas,

- Post referendum arrangements and negotiations for example, resource sharing (oil/land/water/debt)
Action points within the influence of the Security Council:

- Publication and dissemination of the work of the border demarcation commission
- Support reconciliation and planning for post referendum co-existence among border communities
- Increase support for civic education by governments, political parties and civil society
- Support civil society in voter registration, verification and dispute resolution mechanisms
- Sensitize and train traditional authorities to carry out their role in identifying eligible voters
- Review the mandate of UNMIS and expand it to include protecting civilians
- Create mechanisms to prevent violence against minorities and women
- Enhance the capacity of women to contribute to early warning systems
- UNMIS should monitor sensitive areas, e.g., UNS, Unity, NBEG, WBEG, Warrap and Abyei, where violence against women is most likely to erupt.
- The Security Council should place UN peace keeping forces in buffer zones between the North and the South to protect civilians, particularly women and children.