

## **Security Council: Statement by Ambassador Heiko Thoms on "Women, Peace and Security: Sexual Violence in Conflict"**

Madam President,

Allow me to thank Jordan for having organized today's Open Debate.

I thank the Special Representative Zainab Bangura for her insightful briefing. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ms Hamsatu Allamin, who has so knowledgeably spoken about the situation in Nigeria. It is important to hear the voice of civil society in this Council. Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

We welcome the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on conflict-related sexual violence, and we commend UN staff, especially the Women Protection Advisors, who have contributed to the report in such detail.

In recent months, we have heard about women and girls being abducted, sold as slaves, forced into marriage and sexually abused on a regular basis. Whether it is Yazidi women in Iraq, young girls in Northern Nigeria or refugees in South Sudan: all these women and girls are in need of our continued attention and our protection. What is frequently ignored is that sexual violence is not only committed against women and girls, but also men and boys. We witnessed this in Syrian detention centers, and in Afghanistan where boys are exploited by local military commanders.

Madame President,

I would like make three points of particular concern to Germany.

First, we welcome the report's detailed analysis of the emerging phenomenon of violent extremism. The in-depth analysis reveals that sexual violence is not only a widespread crime committed by individuals, but that it functions as an inherent strategic component of the ideology of extremist groups. Sexual violence and abuse is used to terrorize local populations into submission, to forcibly displace unwanted populations, and - even more shockingly - for recruitment of new fighters, who are promised the sexual availability of women and girls.

Now that we have this analysis before us, it is high time to tackle this issue. Robust military and police response can only be a partial answer to this challenge. Sanctions must also be applied, to isolate those who incite and commit such crimes. Such measures need to go hand in hand with work at the grassroots level, where we must strengthen tolerance, the rule of law and the protection of human rights and the compliance with international humanitarian law. At the same time, we need to prevent the symptoms of violent extremism. Government structures need to work with civil society, religious institutions and NGOs to prevent the development of such extremism. Women and their organizations must play a key role in such activities. Therefore, to name but one example, Germany supported a joint initiative of the OSCE

Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department with the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) on women and countering violent extremism last year.

Madame President,

Secondly, we welcome that seven of the listed State parties have committed to joint action with the UN to tackle the issue of sexual violence committed by their troops, and we commend the UN and particularly the Special Representative for their engagement with them. However, this year's report also shows that more and more non-state armed groups are responsible for systematic and wide-spread sexual crimes in conflict. The international community needs to find new and innovative ways to interact with these actors in order to prohibit them from committing such horrific crimes. Local justice systems must be strengthened and the international justice system needs to be employed more effectively. The International Criminal Court, in particular, has a leading role to play in this regard. To this respect, we welcome the ICC's Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes of June 2014.

It is obvious that while sexual violence in conflicts prevails, we also need to focus on the women and girls that fall victim to such violence. Survivors have to be able to access counselling and medical assistance, including the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, they have to be encouraged to report such crimes to the responsible authorities, and any re-victimization and stigmatization has to be prevented. Finally, they have to be accepted and reintegrated into their community. Traditional and religious leaders can play a key role in creating a welcoming environment and countering any form of stigmatization of survivors.

We have always highlighted the crucial role of women as active agents in the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts as well as in reconciliation. Experience has shown that when women have a seat at the table and their voices are heard, outcomes for a lasting peace are better.

Madame President,

Only when we know what is happening on the ground, and this is my third point, we can effectively respond and help those affected by violence. Women Protection Advisors have proven to be an essential asset, which we can also see in the depth of this year's report. At the moment, 20 Women Protection Advisors are deployed to six missions. This is a good start, but not enough. Such advisors should be included in the mandates of all relevant peacekeeping and special political missions, and their funding and deployment needs to be a priority. Moreover, the situation and role of women in armed conflict and its resolution should be included in all briefings and reports on country situations.

Madame President,

In October this year we will celebrate the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325. Together, we will utilize this opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved over the past 15 years. We look forward to the results of the Global Study commissioned by this Council, which will undoubtedly give us concrete guidance on further implementation of Resolution 1325 and its follow-up resolutions.