

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

8234th meeting
Monday, 16 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of the Netherlands, Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren:**

I would like to start by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, and Ms. Razia Sultana for their pertinent briefings. I also wish to express our sincere gratitude to Peru for organizing this important debate.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union, as well as that to be delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2018/250) and today's testimonies from the briefers describe in no uncertain terms the gruesome and widespread prevalence of sexual violence in both conflict-affected and post-conflict settings. The mere fact that the report covers one tenth of the United Nations membership is disturbing in itself.

Allow me to focus on three important aspects: first, the plight of the Rohingya in Myanmar; secondly, the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse; and, thirdly, the course of action to stop impunity. The Kingdom of the Netherlands adds its voice to that of today's civil society briefer, Ms. Sultana, in condemning in the strongest terms the cruelty that Rohingya women and girls have faced both before and after fleeing their homes in Rakhine state. We cannot remain silent about the injustice done, and the trauma inflicted on, those women and girls and their wider communities. It is upsetting that now, after Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a State actor has once again been listed as being credibly suspected or responsible for sexual violence in a situation of armed conflict. That demands a concerted response from the international community to bring justice and rehabilitation to the victims of that violence.

There is a mosaic on the third floor of this building that reads "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", which brings me to my second point. While the report primarily looks at sexual violence inflicted by armed groups and State actors, we cannot ignore cases of sexual exploitation and abuse or sexual harassment committed by those working for, or associated, with the United Nations. The Kingdom of the Netherlands reaffirms its total commitment to the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and on sexual harassment — a matter that is rightfully gaining the attention and visibility it deserves. Masculine-dominated cultures often create obstacles to upholding

zero-tolerance policies. However, like the Secretary-General, we are determined to remove those obstacles and work towards true gender equality.

Moreover, by including women and the gender perspective in prevention, peacekeeping and conflict resolution, we can diminish sexual violence in conflict, as well as sexual exploitation and abuse. My third point is on the course of action to stop impunity. I would like to echo the words of Special Representative Patten: sexual violence is avoidable.

The very first recommendation that the Secretary-General makes to the Security Council in his report is to include sexual violence as a part of the designation criteria for sanctions. Sanctions are a tool that could be more effectively used to deter sexual violence and to curb and constrain the individuals involved. They have the potential to protect the safety and lives of millions of women and girls, as well as boys and men, living in conflict areas. The recent inclusion of that criterion in the sanctions regime for the Central African Republic is a welcome development that needs to be taken up more consistently.

We call on the Council to systematically and explicitly incorporate and apply sexual violence as a designation criterion in sanctions regimes, particularly in those regimes targeting the actors listed in the report. For those conflict-affected countries for which no specific United Nations sanctions regime exists, we urge the Council to consider the adoption of targeted sanctions regimes that would allow for the inclusions of a specific designation criterion on sexual violence.

Ultimately, sanctions cannot be an alternative to prosecution for crimes that are punishable under international law. It is first and foremost up to Member States to ensure the prosecution of perpetrators and to facilitate reparations under international humanitarian law. Furthermore, it is up to Member States to guarantee survivor's access to all legal, psychosocial and medical services, including safe abortion, emergency contraception and HIV treatment.

Strengthening the capacity of national institutions is critical to ensuring accountability for past crimes and prevention and deterrence for the future. In that context, we recognize the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in building national capacities to enhance accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. However, if national governments prove to be unable or unwilling, the Council should revert to other means and channels, such as the International Criminal Court, to make sure that both State and non-State parties comply with their obligations under international law.

Let me end by reiterating our strong support for the work of Special Representative Patten and the vision she has articulated since assuming office last year.