

Open Debate on the SG report on "Conflict-related Sexual Violence" in the Security Council

NEW YORK, 15 April 2015

Statement by Deputy Permanent Representative / Chargé d’Affaires of the Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations Peter van der Vliet, Open Debate on the SG report on "Conflict-related Sexual Violence" in the Security Council.

Introduction

The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes this debate as well as the report by the Secretary-General.

I align myself with the statement of the EU.

I appreciate the opportunity to make additional national remarks and reiterate my country’s commitment in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence across the world.

I would also like to applaud Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zainab Bangura and UN Action and the Team of Experts for their efforts worldwide, both as advocates and through their expert support.

Disturbing trend: sexual violence as a tactic of terror

With violent extremism on the rise, the report by the Secretary-General rightly draws our attention to the disturbing trend of sexual violence as a tactic of terror. The mass-scale violence against Yezidi girls and Chibok schoolgirls are two horrific examples of the specific targeting of women and girls by extremist groups.

Violent extremism leads to the systematic disempowerment of women. It is part of the objectives, ideology and funding of extremist groups.

And all of this is happening while a couple of doors down in this building, we are negotiating in good faith a sustainable development agenda that includes a strong goal on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

It is these efforts, our efforts, and our determination, that must prevail.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands as partner

Sexual violence is pervasive in conflict and post-conflict situations and reflective of broader and unequal gender relations in those societies. It is not a stand-alone problem that can be solved in isolation. What is needed is a fully integrated approach that addresses deeply rooted gender inequalities, that is context-specific and that works to empower women.

The Netherlands strives to do exactly that – we approach the issue of sexual violence in conflict from several angles, using concrete instruments of foreign policy that we have at our disposal.

For instance, in our civilian and military contributions to multilateral missions – most recently to MINUSMA in Mali – attention for the issue of gender inequalities and sexual violence in conflict is an integral part of our national preparation. Both our police and military officers who are now in Mali received pre-deployment training on gender, human rights and international humanitarian law.

Together with our valued partner Spain, we also offer regular trainings for other countries on gender in operations to professionals from the military, police, diplomatic community, as well as to civilian experts and activists.

Recently, we launched a specialized pilot training together with UN Women for female military officers. This training is meant to increase the number and capacity of female peacekeepers.

Deploying Women Protection Advisors and Gender Advisors are another way to ensure the full implementation of the resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. We make available such civilian expertise on gender and combating sexual violence to UN missions. In MONUSCO, for example, we support the deployment of a senior Women Protection Advisor. I am glad that Ms. van Dueren is present here today at our debate. The structural inclusion of women protection advisors and gender advisors in peacekeeping budget is an issue for further consideration.

Through our program FLOW 'Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women', we support women's rights organisations around the globe.

Our National Action Plan 1325 comes with an annual fund for civil society programming in support of women's political participation and leadership.

And we contribute to several UN trustfunds, including UNWomen's Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women.

Justice and accountability

Madam president,

In situations where the justice sector is ill-functioning, survivors who have gone through the trauma of an attack too often face additional risks like rejection by their families and communities, double victimization by state authorities, limited health services (including a lack of access to safe abortion and psycho-social support) and many other risks. They should not go through this ordeal in getting the justice and assistance they need and deserve. Perpetrators of sexual violence, whether state or non-state actors, should be brought to justice and held accountable.

There can be no justice and accountability in situations where the stigma and shame associated with sexual violence remains with the victim rather than the perpetrator. Equally, there can be no justice and accountability in situations where women and young girls are abducted, enslaved and traded openly while these horrific acts are justified by extremist groups on the grounds of 'religion'.

There is no religion or culture that commands or justifies these evil acts. Therefore, we need to fight ideologies or propaganda by non-state actors that advocate for sexual violence against women and girls and that want to deny the rights and freedoms of citizens, particularly those of women.

There is a clear role for the International Criminal Court and other tribunals. The Netherlands very much commends the broad jurisdiction of the ICC on the issue of conflict related sexual violence.

Women as leaders

Madam President,

We should not think of women and girls only as victims. We know about the resilience of many survivors. We also know that empowered women who participate in decision making and take up leadership roles can make a real difference.

Many brave women are actively resisting the influence and rule of extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. We believe in the power of these women as agents for peace and justice and as representatives of communities living in conflict, and we work actively to support them.

In conclusion Mr. President,

If we are serious about realizing the sustainable development goals, including achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, then we must put an end to conflict-related sexual violence anywhere and forever.

Thank you.