

**Security Council**

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*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of Pakistan, Ms. Lodhi:**

My delegation commends your effort, Mr. President, in organizing this open debate on an issue of critical importance. We thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, for their informative briefings this morning.

For far too long, sexual violence has remained a grim and inevitable reality of armed conflicts, which has often been employed systematically and with impunity, to coerce, punish, humiliate and instil fear among the targeted civilian population. Even as the international community has come together to collectively condemn such acts of unimaginable horror, sexual abuse of women and girls continues to be used as a tactic of war in conflicts around the world.

While sexual violence remains a designated war crime and a crime against humanity, for survivors its impact goes well beyond the ordeal of the harrowing experience itself. Stigma and marginalization often outlast the conflict, and the trauma haunts survivors for the rest of their lives.

The recent report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2018/250) rightly emphasizes how the effects of such violence can echo across generations. The Security Council has been proactively taking up this issue under its women and peace and security agenda. The legal framework and institutional focus are in place, but complicated geopolitics around various conflicts and divisions within the Chamber have allowed perpetrators to continue to carry out these heinous atrocities with impunity.

From Myanmar to my own country's neighbourhood, the world continues to watch in horror as several State and non-State actors employ rape and sexual abuse as a deliberate policy to subdue and oppress entire populations. A lack of verifiable and independent reporting from many of these hotspots is letting those who commit and condone these acts go scot-free.

In order to combat impunity for these crimes and protect women and girls from systematic abuse, the international community needs to recalibrate and revisit its response. Let me make four specific points in that regard.

First, the Security Council, as the primary body tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security, should focus on addressing the root causes of conflict to remove the breeding grounds for such crimes.

Secondly, mechanisms to independently investigate and verify reports emerging from conflict situations where sexual violence is taking place are critical to dealing with the challenge.

Thirdly, we must also take concrete steps to enhance the capacity of national institutions and improve criminal justice systems in countries facing armed conflict.

Fourthly, justice does not only mean punishment for the perpetrators. It also means redress for the survivors. Victim protection and rehabilitation should remain a top priority. The stigma attached to victimhood must be redirected towards the perpetrators. They are the ones who should be made an example of, not just as a matter of retribution but also as a preventive measure.

My country has always advocated the integration of the gender perspective into the peacebuilding paradigm to promote the cause of sustaining peace. As one of the world's leading troop-contributing countries, Pakistan has set the highest standards in fulfilling peacekeeping mandates, including protecting vulnerable segments of the population, especially women and children, from violence. We fully support the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Pakistan was among the first countries to sign the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on the subject. We have also contributed to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

To share our experience and promote best practices in peacekeeping, we have established a United Nations peacekeeping training institute in Pakistan, which offers specially designed modules to help peacekeepers respond effectively and protect innocent civilians from sexual violence. We also believe that increasing participation by female peacekeepers and encouraging more women to take up mediation roles will help in the stabilization and reconstruction phase of post-conflict rehabilitation.

For my country, protecting the vulnerable, including women and children, is not only a global peace and security imperative. More important, this is an obligation of humanity. We remain resolute and steadfast in our commitment.