

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

8234th meeting

Monday, 16 April 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of the United Arab Emirates, Mrs. Nusseibeh:**

I thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on sexual violence in conflict. We join others in thanking Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her briefing. We also thank Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and offer our continued support to her Office and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for their important work in combating those heinous crimes.

As a member of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, the United Arab Emirates endorses the Group's joint statement, delivered earlier by the representative of Canada.

Ten years have passed since the Security Council adopted resolution 1820 (2008), thereby recognizing for the first time that sexual violence is used as a tactic of war and is therefore a matter of international peace and security. Since then, subsequent resolutions have sought to strengthen the United Nations response aimed at ending those crimes and ensuring accountability for their perpetrators, but owing to a lack of implementation, they have sadly fallen short.

It is also impossible to overstate the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in efforts to prevent and respond to such crimes. In fact, as many here have said today, gender equality and women's empowerment, which are fundamental principles of United Arab Emirates foreign policy, are core values that can prevent violence against women when they are woven throughout a society. That is one of the many reasons why the United Arab Emirates stands with the report (S/2018/250) of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict, which rightly affirms that women's physical security is inextricably linked to their political, social and economic status and rights.

Our region is one in turmoil, under siege by terrorist groups such as Da'esh that use sexual violence to terrorize and displace populations. To be under Da'esh's control is to live with the constant fear of rape as a weapon of punishment for resisting its sick world view. The gains made in the struggle against Da'esh in 2017 were significant, but we must be vigilant with regard to the continued risk of the trafficking of women and children who remain under their control. The Secretary-General's report makes it clear that most incidents of mass rape continue to be met with mass impunity.

For example, not a single member of Da'esh has been prosecuted for sexual violence offences to date. That sends a dangerous message to groups that use sexual violence as a tactic of terror with the aim of

destroying lives and communities. This is why the situation of the Rohingya is so alarming. The mass exodus of the Rohingya community from Myanmar has created a humanitarian crisis that has rightly captured the world's attention. The international community must ensure accountability for these victims — mainly women and girls, but also men and boys — who have been unacceptably targeted for their religion or ethnicity.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are key tenets of the world view of the United Arab Emirates. That is why women's protection and empowerment form one of the three pillars on which our entire foreign assistance strategy rests. It is by mainstreaming those ideals in our global engagement that we can prevent sexual violence in conflict by creating stable, tolerant and prosperous societies. We must intensify our efforts to combat impunity for these crimes and to utilize the tools of the United Nations and the Security Council more effectively to ensure accountability. With the support of the United Arab Emirates, the Team of Experts has carried out its vital Security Council mandate to strengthen Member States' capacity to address sexual violence in conflict in some of the world's most challenging contexts. The United Arab Emirates encourages other Member States to support that work.

The United Arab Emirates believes that smart foreign policy is inclusive foreign policy, one that puts the rights of women front and centre and at the heart of our collective response. The United Arab Emirates will continue to do all that it can to address those crimes and promote gender equality and women's empowerment as critical elements of the peace and security agenda.