

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Nazarian, Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations.

We welcome your initiative, Mr. President, in convening this debate on an issue that has gained strong public and political acknowledgement. I also thank the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, as well as the Special Envoy of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the representative of the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice.

We continue to witness a disturbing increase in the trend to use sexual violence as a political and military tool, the effects of which are grave and long-lasting, often alienating entire groups, communities and peoples. It is unfortunate that, despite the existence of international legal instruments and normative mechanisms, there is an alarming escalation in the levels of sexual violence during and after armed conflicts, which has devastating consequences on women and girls. Their protection deserves our utmost attention as a primary responsibility of all of us, because it is a serious humanitarian concern and significant security issue. It also requires a multidimensional approach.

Over the past decade, particular attention has been paid to addressing some of the specific crimes experienced by women and girls during armed conflict, namely, rape, trafficking, forced prostitution and enslavement. Today it is critical to ensure accountability for past and present crimes and not to grant immunity to perpetrators or amnesty for future crimes.

It is commendable that the Council continues to focus on how best to achieve effective justice for crimes of sexual violence in conflict in order to end impunity, formally investigate and prosecute persons responsible for such crimes and grave violations, prevent their recurrence and seek justice and peace.

In that context, Armenia also attaches the utmost importance to the promotion of justice and the rule of law, as those values are indispensable for the maintenance of international and regional security and the protection of human rights. A consensus has emerged that the rule of law should be promoted at both the national and the international levels and should be based on the Charter of the United Nations, the norms of international law and the principle of good governance. We therefore share the views expressed by Council members and other speakers calling for more systematic attention to impunity and justice. We also agree that increased efforts to fight impunity at the national and international levels are essential.

I would also like to emphasize that special attention must be paid to children who are victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence, especially girls, who usually make up the largest group of victims in armed conflict. In addition to the physical damage it causes, sexual violence often leaves other forms of lasting harm and stigma.

However, we cannot address sexual violence simply by naming and punishing offenders. More fundamental changes are needed at the institutional and societal levels. In that context, sexual violence against women will never be adequately addressed without focusing on the empowerment of women and their participation in the political, social and economic spheres.

Armenia takes note of some positive trends in that field. Over the past decade, the Security Council has put in place a normative framework for women's participation in peace processes, the protection and promotion of women's human rights and the mainstreaming of gender equality and perspectives

in the contexts of armed conflict, peacebuilding and reconstruction.

Peacebuilding needs the involvement of women. The role played by women in peacebuilding in many countries over the past decade has highlighted the importance of their full participation. Women need to be present at the table to discuss issues such as genocide, impunity and security, if a just and enduring peace is to be built.

However, despite the progress made, a great deal remains to be addressed and accomplished, as female voices are not always heard. Women remain largely excluded, especially from efforts to find workable solutions to conflicts. We should further promote their participation.

It will come as news to no one that the costs of conflict are borne disproportionately by women and girls. And since women pay the highest price when peace is absent, they are important stakeholders in peacebuilding. The inclusion of women in all stages of peace processes would help guarantee more lasting and representative settlements.

Armenia recognizes the key role and critical efforts of the Security Council in preventing sexual violence and combating impunity in conflict and post-conflict situations. We have encouraged continued action by the Council, including the development of effective measures to put an end to sexual violence in conflict. We welcome the adoption of today's resolution by the Council (resolution 2106 (2013)), which will serve as a practical tool in the consideration of policies, programmes and actions that can successfully further the implementation of commitments in combating sexual violence.

Armenia expresses its readiness to work closely with the Council, other United Nations bodies, interested institutions and concerned non-governmental organizations to expand and implement the women and peace and security agenda and better the situation of women around the world, including those affected by armed conflict.