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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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Women, Peace and Security

Statement by H.E. Gary Quinlan Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Australia remains committed to ending the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence. As well as the outrageous breach of women's rights such sexual violence entails, its impact on families and communities is particularly devastating and has consequent long-lasting negative effects on peace processes.

Madame President,

We welcome Ms Wallström's appointment and her efforts since taking office towards plugging some of the operational gaps in this agenda as well as her broader advocacy efforts.

We support the Secretary-General's impressive recommendations on specific steps that need to be taken to address the remaining challenges in this field.

The proposal for the UN system to set up a mechanism to better monitor, report and analyse data on sexual violence, and to ensure that information flows effectively to the Security Council, is particularly constructive. We urge the Council's sanctions committees to give due regard to relevant information they receive. We recently witnessed the first listing of an individual by the Council's Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions committee on children and armed conflict grounds. Similar listings of individuals on sexual violence grounds would be an important deterrence to others.

Of course, information flowing to the Council would need to be reliable. The Council's endorsement in October of the comprehensive set of indicators was a significant achievement in this regard. We look forward to the UN system putting these into action to collect data on sexual violence, as well as to inform policy and programmatic responses.

Often early warning signs of conflict-related sexual violence are received. But as the July-August mass rapes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo sadly demonstrated, the UN's coordinated and comprehensive analysis of these signs must be strengthened in order to improve the prospects for preventing attacks on civilians. Sexual violence is not unique in this regard. We encourage all relevant parts of the UN system to collaborate to identify a comprehensive matrix of early warning signs and recommended responses. The Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on R2P are also undertaking relevant and important work in this field. A coordinated and comprehensive approach to early warning will enhance the response capacity of peacekeepers on the ground.

Madame President,

The Secretary-General's report was particularly valuable because it identified practical and pragmatic ways this issue can be tackled. Australia is a firm supporter of tangible, practical solutions. There remains a gap between our collective expectations on what UN peacekeeping should be able to do and the actual capacity of peacekeepers on the ground. Operational guidance, training and resources need to be provided to mission leadership and peacekeepers, so that they are prepared to take action in response to threats against civilians during conflict, including sexual violence.

Australia was pleased to support the joint 'Analytical Inventory' developed by DPKO and UNIFEM, under the auspices of the inter-agency network UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. This is a key tool for the UN to use in improving its ability to protect civilians from conflict-related sexual violence as part of peacekeeping operations. We are supporting our UN partners to fully operationalise this tool, including by incorporating it into pre-deployment training for peacekeepers. This is the scenario-based training referred to in the Secretary-General's report.

We are also supporting UNHCR to implement a strategy to combat sexual violence in internally displaced communities in North and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNHCR's strategy to create a common framework and actions for all those involved in combating sexual violence in that country could be applied in other situations involving internally displaced persons.

Madame President,

Much more remains to be done to address this vital issue. We look forward to further reporting and briefing on how the UN system has gone about translating the list of proposals in the Secretary-General's report into action. Annual reporting is needed. Next year a report could, for example, document action and achievements to address conflict-related sexual violence including the development of terms of reference for the new women's protection advisers and any actions undertaken by them. Real and effective action to address sexual violence in conflict-related situations requires ongoing dedication to action. For its part, Australia remains firmly committed to this goal.