

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Nkoloji, Permanent Mission of Botswana to the United Nations.

Allow me to join everyone here in congratulating you and your country, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. In the same vein, I would like to extend our gratitude for all the information that we have received during the open thematic debates on these very important topics.

I wish to begin by reaffirming the importance that Botswana attaches to the protection and promotion of the rights of women and children, as well as the need to address all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence in the context of armed conflict.

We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/149), which highlights actions taken and challenges faced by States in conflict and post-conflict situations to protect women and children from sexual violence. My delegation further takes note of the analysis that the report provides, as well as the recommendations contained therein.

Sexual violence in armed conflict represents one of the most serious forms of the violation or abuse of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict is therefore both a matter of upholding universal human rights and of maintaining international peace and security, in keeping with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In that regard, Botswana welcomes the continued focus by the Council on this thematic area and wishes to emphasize the need for increased and more systemic attention to the agenda women and peace and security in the Council's work. We believe that efforts to address sexual violence in armed conflict should be consistent with and complementary to wider efforts to promote the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant resolutions on women and peace and security. To that end, my delegation also welcomes the work of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in building coherence and coordination in the United Nations response to sexual violence in armed conflict. In that regard, Botswana supports the Special Representative's focus on national ownership and responsibility, by engaging with Governments and armed groups to establish their commitment to accountability for sexual violence, so as to create procedures that will allow such commitments to be systematically monitored. I would also like to emphasize that greater coordination and collaboration with other relevant stakeholders is important to improving global efforts to address sexual violence.

The current report highlights several emerging concerns, including sexual violence against men and boys, particularly in the context of detention, as well as the plight of children born out of rape, sexual slavery and forced marriages by armed groups, as has been documented in countries such as Mali, the Central African Republic, Somalia and others. We also take note of the parties named in the report, which includes the following significant additions: the Syrian Government forces and their allied militia, the Shabbiha; the Séléka rebels in the Central African Republic; and several armed groups in Mali. Additions to the existing listings for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, such as the Police nationale congolaise, the Mouvement du 23 Mars and several more Mai-Mai groups in the Kivus, have also been noted.

Despite the international community's repeated condemnation of sexual violence in armed conflict, we remain deeply concerned about the fact that such acts continue to occur and in some situations have even become systematic and widespread. Impunity for sexual violence by armed groups is

unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. In that regard, my delegation wishes to stress the urgency and importance of demonstrating commitment and political will through efforts to prevent sexual violence and enforce accountability by prosecuting those responsible for perpetrating crimes against civilians. We therefore call on the Security Council to continue its efforts to fight impunity and uphold accountability. Through its relevant Sanctions Committees, the Council should also consider the possible effectiveness of existing sanctions regimes on parties named in the report.

Botswana strongly supports the involvement of women in peace negotiations, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. We are also supportive of calls for addressing concerns about sexual violence in mediation and peace processes, particularly in the context of security arrangements and transitional justice mechanisms. However, we believe that such efforts should take into consideration the needs and rights of women and children. I also wish to emphasize the importance of enhancing efforts to eliminate obstacles to women's access to justice, as well as of assisting States in conflict and post-conflict situations in their efforts to address sexual violence.

Ending violations of women's human rights is a moral imperative and one we must collectively commit to if we are to achieve it. In that regard, Botswana strongly supports all efforts aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and children, including sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. In conclusion, we remain optimistic that, given our collective will, especially in the Security Council, we can bring an end to such heinous crimes.