

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mr. Patriota, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations.

I wish to thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate on the important matter before us. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and for his report (S/2014/181). I am also grateful to Special Representative Zainab Bangura for her presentation, and I wish to commend her and her Office for the crucial role that they have been playing in international efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict.

May I also refer to the very moving presentation by Ms. Rhoda Misak, from the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. May the Council and the United Nations membership more broadly heed the six areas of serious concern related to the situation in South Sudan and sexual violence in all conflicts, including in those situations that are not the focus of the international community.

Let me also express my satisfaction in welcoming the Minister of National Defence of our sister nation Ecuador, Her Excellency Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, to participate in this debate. I think that all of us in South America feel very well represented by her statement.

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is abhorrent and utterly unacceptable. These crimes destroy the social fabric of communities and inflict long-lasting psychological trauma.

We welcome the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, issued at the beginning of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, which Brazil supported.

The latest report of the Secretary-General serves as a stark reminder that sexual violence is still being used as a tool of intimidation and social control in conflict and post-conflict situations. It rightly states that the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict often leaves lasting effects with acute consequences for the security of women and children in peacetime. Ultimately, that has a direct bearing on the durability of peace and prospects for sustainable development.

Brazil has repeatedly condemned all forms of violence against all women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict. We continue to advocate that one of the most important ways to combat conflict-related sexual violence lies in policies aimed at the prevention and peaceful resolution of armed conflicts. Preventative measures could prove instrumental to spare the human and psychological costs associated with sexual violence. They involve, among other things, strengthening national capacities, changing how victims are perceived in their communities and protecting witnesses. They also encompass curbing the availability of weapons used to commit those atrocities, ensuring, through adequate predeployment training, that peacekeeping missions are increasingly instrumental in preventing conflict-related sexual violence, and promoting criminal accountability and due prosecution of sexual violence crimes.

The international community has adopted an extensive legal framework dealing with violence against women. The 1993 General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (General Assembly resolution 48/104), the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, inter alia, include requirements for the prohibition of all forms of gender-based violence to be incorporated into national legislation. Peace agreements and post-conflict measures should build on those and other frameworks under international law.

However, in practice, peace agreements rarely make reference to the need to eradicate all forms of violence against all women and girls. They seldom include provisions linked to accountability for gender-based violence. Post-conflict arrangements hardly ever deal with the situation of women who have been subjected to violence during conflict and its aftermath. Sexual violence, including domestic violence, is still not sufficiently viewed as a threat to peacebuilding and related to broader issues of insecurity.

Conflict-related sexual violence needs to be explicitly addressed in security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. More has to be done to ensure that women are active participants in peace agreements and in the negotiation, design and implementation of post-conflict and peacebuilding arrangements.

Brazil is aiding victims of sexual violence in various countries, including Haiti, Guinea-Bissau and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A Brazilian donation of \$1 million to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, specifically intended to help victims of sexual violence seek reparations and justice, has so far benefited 510 victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the same spirit, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency has implemented projects with the United Nations Population Fund in Haiti and Guinea-Bissau, focusing on capacity-building to deal with victims of gender-based violence in areas such as health, justice and security.

On the domestic front, Brazil has incorporated, in its National Policy Plan on Women for the 2013-2015 biennium, the relevant recommendations contained in resolution 1325 (2000), including those aimed at fighting sexual violence as a weapon of war. In March 2013, the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations hosted a seminar, organized by the Igarapé Institute think-tank, on the theme “Women, Peace and Security in Brazil: overcoming challenges and bridging gaps”. The event proved to be a fruitful opportunity to assess ways in which Brazil could advance the discussion at the national level and contribute towards multilateral efforts on women and peace and security.

I would like to highlight once more the importance of the empowerment of women for the prevention of sexual and all other forms of violence against women and, in a broader context, for the prospects of sustainable peace. As already recognized by the Peacebuilding Commission, the transformative potential of greater participation by women in the economic and political spheres can make an invaluable contribution to building more peaceful, democratic and prosperous societies.

During a recent trip to Guinea-Bissau, in my capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, I was impressed by the contribution that women’s organizations have made to forging a more inclusive political culture in the country.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to those who have been working closely with the victims of sexual violence to lessen their suffering. The name of Dr. Denis Mukwege of the Democratic Republic of the Congo comes to mind as an example of courage, selflessness and solidarity. His authoritative call for action during his statement to the General Assembly in 2012 continues to resonate to this day.

The international community should use this periodic debate as an opportunity to renew its commitment to the creation of a world where women, men and children do not have to endure the suffering of being a victim or a victim’s relative of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.