

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

Statement by Mr. Fernandes, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations.

I thank the Rwandan presidency for convening this debate on such an important issue for international peace and security. I also thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and his comprehensive report (S/2013/149) on sexual violence in armed conflict. We are grateful to Special Representative Bangura for her presentation and her dedication to this cause. We would also like to express our appreciation to the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for her statement.

The Security Council's engagement with the issue of women and peace and security has greatly contributed to our common efforts to improve the lives of women in conflict situations around the world. The resolutions adopted by the Council have not only created a comprehensive body of norms and tools, but have also stimulated discussion, self-criticism and progress on the protection and promotion of women's rights.

Today we focus our attention on one of the most appalling aspects of the women and peace and security agenda: the problem of sexual violence in conflict. The challenge when discussing this scourge is to translate our sorrow and outrage into practical action capable of bringing about real change. Only an integrated approach that combines a sharper focus on prevention, the fight against impunity and better support to victims can help us fight sexual violence in conflict in an effective and decisive manner.

Prevention is always the best remedy. It involves, in the first place, strengthening national capacities, addressing the needs of States in terms of institution-building, training personnel, supporting victims and promoting the rule of law. Developing national awareness-raising activities and information campaigns to break taboos and misperceptions around the issue is also important.

Prevention also involves tackling the disturbing relationship between the widespread availability of illicit small arms and light weapons and conflict-related sexual violence. We acknowledge the progress achieved by the adoption of the landmark Arms Trade Treaty, which establishes that conventional arms should not be exported when they might be used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence. We regret, however, that it was not possible to include in the Treaty a clear prohibition of transfers to unauthorized non-State actors, as such a provision would greatly contribute to the objective of preventing the commission of sexual violence in conflict.

Peacekeeping operations are another important pillar contributing to the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. Local populations and international public opinion have high expectations concerning the role of United Nations peacekeepers in preventing sexual violence. In that regard, adequate training remains key, not only to ensure that peacekeepers acquire a proper understanding of how to address cases of sexual violence, but also to enable them to apply concrete prevention strategies.

That preventive role requires resources compatible with the magnitude of the tasks involved. Brazil has taken some meaningful steps. We have signed a letter of intent with UN-Women to deepen our cooperation regarding the training of peacekeepers on gender issues and the promotion of South-South cooperation on gender issues involving peacekeeping training centres in Latin America and Africa. Furthermore, Brazil has been involved in cooperation activities with a number of countries emerging from conflict in areas related to sexual violence. The Brazilian Cooperation Agency has, for instance, been working with the United Nations Population Fund in Haiti and Guinea-Bissau to

build institutional capacity to deal with victims of gender- based violence in areas such as health, justice and security.

As an important element in efforts to achieve justice, the fight against impunity is essential as a means to put an end to sexual violence in conflict. It acts as a deterrent for perpetrators and contributes to righting the wrongs done to victims. Brazil appreciates the work that Ms. Bangura's Office carries out in support of the strengthening of national capacities aimed at bringing perpetrators to justice. The Security Council can assist in fighting impunity by addressing such violence in its subsidiary bodies as appropriate. More discussion is needed, however, on the idea of adopting targeted and gradual measures in contexts where no sanctions regimes are in place, as that could amount to applying restrictive measures in situations that have not been determined by the Security Council to constitute threats to international peace and security.

Dealing with sexual violence requires that we act on many fronts simultaneously. Over the past few years, the international community has made important normative progress, which has allowed us to reframe the issue of sexual violence in different terms. We must now work more effectively to implement those norms. Brazil is committed to this cause and is ready to work in line with Security Council provisions with the goal of effectively addressing sexual violence in conflict situations in all its aspects.