

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

Statement by Mr. Thomson, Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations.

Allow me, first, to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate, which provides an opportunity for all members to contribute to the discussion on the global women and peace and security agenda. Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/149), which provides a clear articulation of the current and emerging concerns regarding sexual violence as it pertains to international peace and security.

The past debates of the Council on women and peace and security in which Fiji has participated have focused on the broader implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The current report of the Secretary-General focuses on sexual violence in conflict, bringing into sharper focus the work needed for the implementation of the subsequent resolutions, in particular resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010).

Fiji is committed to the elimination of sexual violence and to working both domestically and with the international community to do so. At the national level, Fiji's Ministry of Women has revived the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Elimination of Violence against Women to coordinate policy responses across all Government agencies. It is working with the Fiji police force to implement the law introduced in the last few years that, among other things, introduced marital rape as a specific offence under the criminal code, and also introduced a child-welfare code requiring teachers, doctors and other professionals to report suspected child-abuse cases. The Ministry also champions a campaign on zero tolerance of violence against women and children, which operates at the community level in partnership with community leaders, the police force and non-governmental organizations.

At the international level, Fiji's commitment to eliminating sexual violence is expressed primarily through its peacekeeping efforts. Fiji sends police peacekeepers to missions where the mandate includes capacity-building of local security institutions. In post-conflict situations, our experience has been that a large part of that capacity-building is to assist local security institutions in responding to cases of sexual violence, from initial contact with victims through victim counseling through to the finality of police involvement in such cases. Beyond this, community policing and assisting local police institutions in awareness-raising and preventative policing has also formed part of Fiji's contribution.

Eliminating sexual violence is crucial, because only in the absence of sexual and other forms of violence will the empowerment of women be possible so as to achieve gender equality. Women in our communities are change-makers and core to the functioning of our communities. They are first responders in moments of crisis, including in responding to natural disasters and in adapting the approach of communities to new challenges such as those posed by climate change. Our societies are only as strong as the weakest among us. If we are to address emerging security and developmental challenges, we have to ensure that those most at risk of marginalization, including at-risk women and children, are freed from the risk of violence and fully empowered to contribute.

Accordingly, I would like to conclude by restating Fiji's steadfast commitment to working with the international community to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions.