

## **Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Briens, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations.*

I would like to thank you, Madam President, for having convened this debate. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura; and Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité, representative of civil society of Mali.

Sexual violence has been a part of all wars in history but, as the Group of Eight recalled in its ministerial statement of 11 April, it has long been seen as an unimportant and secondary issue that does not merit the international community's attention. Sexual violence was never taken into account in the context of conflict resolution or after conflicts. In adopting resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), the Security Council resisted that fate. It took up the issue and broke the silence that hung over that abominable crime.

Since then, significant progress has been made — political progress, first and foremost, thanks to the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. I welcome her commitment, which has made it possible to increase the international visibility of the issue.

There has also been institutional progress, with the monitoring and reporting mechanism on sexual violence, upon which the annual reports of the Secretary-General are based. Those reports provide the Council with valuable tools for following up on those crimes. In particular, the “list of shame” of parties committing systematic and orchestrated acts of sexual violence gives United Nations missions a solid basis for engaging a dialogue with those groups.

Finally, with regard to legal progress, the ad hoc tribunals created by the Council, and then the International Criminal Court (ICC), have included acts of sexual violence among the crimes within their jurisdiction. They have been recognized as war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide.

That progress was recently confirmed by the Arms Trade Treaty, adopted by the General Assembly on 2 April, which contains provisions against gender- based violence. France vigorously supported that part of the Treaty.

France also welcomes the zero-tolerance policy for United Nations personnel implemented by the Secretary-General, a policy that should be tirelessly pursued. Similarly, we support the Secretary-General's due diligence policy, his policy of screening peacekeeping and political mission staff with regard to respect for human rights, as well as his policy on restricting contact with persons being sought by the ICC. The Secretary-General has thereby confirmed his commitment to the accountability of the Organization.

Despite that progress, we have no other choice but to deplore the scope and frequency of sexual violence in conflicts, which is continually being used as a weapon to terrorize civilian populations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in spite of the mobilization of the international community, sexual violence remains omnipresent. Committed by all parties, sexual violence is also perpetuated within the Congolese army, particularly because of shortcomings

in the screening, selection and training processes for ex-militia integrated into the Congolese forces. The response to the Minova tragedy should stand as an example. The Congolese authorities must do more, and more quickly, to punish the guilty. They must also take a determined and convincing stand

for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and security sector reform programmes.

Brave men and women are fighting to end the violence and help the survivors. In that regard, we must pay tribute to the tireless work of Dr. Mukwege and his teams, who have risked their own lives to treat victims of sexual violence in the Congo. They must be heard, supported and protected.

Furthermore, we expect that the Intervention Brigade established under resolution 2098 (2013) will help strengthen the work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to protect civilians by helping to neutralize and disarm the militias that are threatening populations, and that it will work effectively with the Congolese authorities to arrest the criminals.

In Syria, the regime and its supporters are systematically using sexual violence to intimidate civilians and to get them to flee. Those crimes may be added to the long list of those committed by the Syrian armed forces against their own people. France believes that the referral of the matter to the ICC is amply justified.

After the defeat of the armed groups in northern Mali, justice must follow its course for the victims of sexual violence. The matter has been referred to the ICC. Legal and psychological assistance will need to be provided to victims and survivors. With the assistance of the United Nations, the Malian authorities cannot choose to overlook the issue.

We are concerned by the deterioration of the security situation in the Central African Republic, where armed groups are guilty of kidnapping and sexual exploitation. Those crimes must stop, and the guilty parties must be pursued.

To deal with sexual violence, a number of challenges need to be addressed. Protection, sanctions and prevention must be our watchwords.

Protection is first. On the ground, women's protection advisers are bringing greater awareness of sexual violence issues to the daily work of the Blue Helmets. Their role is crucial, and France hopes that their deployment within peacekeeping missions and political missions will be expanded. Above all, when they have the mandate to do so, missions should provide the resources necessary to help the work of these advisers.

With respect to sanctions, in order for victims to no longer be stigmatized for the crimes they have suffered, we must do away with impunity for sexual violence. National Governments have the primary responsibility to prosecute and punish perpetrators of such crimes. When States fail to uphold their responsibilities, the International Criminal Court should play its role in full. France welcomes the exemplary cooperation between the Court and the countries concerned that led to the transfer to The Hague of Mr. Bosco Ntaganda.

To protect, to sanction and, finally, to prevent — for that, the participation of women in the resolution of conflicts represents a basic element. It will, for example, be a significant dimension for reconciliation in Mali, which France took into account in the draft resolution currently being discussed.

France, within the framework of its national action plan for implementing resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, is financing anti-violence programmes in six countries in Africa and the Arab world being implemented by UN-Women. The staff we are sending abroad from our country are trained in issues of sexual violence, and we support the integration of gender issues in

peacekeeping schools in Africa.

The Council can be assured of our commitment and determination in promoting and defending the rights of women and girls throughout the world, as well as in implementing resolutions on women, peace and security.