

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

*Statement by Mr. Bernardini, Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations.*

Allow me to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate of the Security Council and by complimenting the Secretary-General, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security on their important statements. I also wish to assure the Special Representative of the Italian Government's full support for the fulfillment of her mandate.

Italy aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. I wish to make the following remarks in a national capacity.

The Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149) gives us a comprehensive picture of a daunting challenge for the international community. In far too many conflict-related situations, women, men and children are not protected from such international crimes. We are particularly concerned about the serious human rights violations in northern Mali, including rape; the heightened risk of rape for refugees and internally displaced persons; the perpetration of rape and sexual violence in detention centres in Syria; and the alarming number of incidents of sexual violence in Somalia. We also note with concern emerging trends such as the perpetration of sexual violence against men and boys, the plight of children born as a result of a rape, and the practice of forced marriages by armed groups.

There are key early-warning and conflict-prevention tools that the international community can use to prevent such heinous acts. For example, timely briefings to the Security Council by the Secretary-General's Special Representative and by UN-Women; the roll-out of United Nations system monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements; and the inclusion of women's protection advisers in peacekeeping missions and political missions.

At the same time, we need a powerful response. Again, the Security Council needs to step up pressure on perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflicts through the adoption of targeted measures by the relevant Sanctions Committees. When there is no ad hoc committee, the Council should close any protection or impunity gaps. The Council should incorporate measures on sexual violence in all the relevant country resolutions and in the authorization and renewal of the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions.

The commitments of the parties to a conflict should be monitored and followed up, and a zero-tolerance policy should be taken towards sexual misconduct by peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding personnel.

International justice has placed a welcome emphasis on combating sexual violence as a complement to national efforts, in particular under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Comprehensive justice strategies are essential, including accountability and reparation, following a victim-centered approach. The Security Council should also contribute to ensuring that there no safe havens for the perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflict.

Cooperation with civil society organizations, particularly women-led civil society organizations, should accompany those actions. Governments must ensure the protection of women's human rights defenders, who face particular risks in conflict situations.

In March, the Commission on the Status of Women approved agreed conclusions with a strong

condemnation of all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence. The Arms Trade Treaty, adopted by the General Assembly just this month, obliges States parties to take into account the risk of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence. The Group of Eight made a strong commitment to addressing impunity and preventing sexual violence in conflict. Italy has always supported all such commitments, which must now be followed by concrete actions.

As a supporter of the landmark resolution 1820 (2009), Italy is convinced of the evident connection between ending sexual violence and promoting peace and security. That is why the Italian national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) includes specific provisions to address sexual violence in conflict. The 2013 Italian development cooperation strategy includes capacity-building activities and the provision of assistance to survivors in Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, the Sudan and Syria. The Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units, the Vicenza-based training centre, created by the Italian Government in 2005, systematically includes the prevention of sexual violence in their courses for peacekeepers.

Let me conclude by urging everyone not to forget that the primary responsibility for addressing sexual violence still lies with States, as the Secretary-General indicated in his call for national ownership and leadership. As responsible Governments, we owe that to the survivors of sexual violence and to the families of victims. Italy stands ready to assist and support such efforts.