

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

I welcome your initiative, Madam President, to convene under the presidency of Nigeria this open debate on sexual violence in conflict. The Secretary-General's presentation and his regular participation in open debates on this topic show the commitment to the fight against sexual violence at the highest level within the United Nations. I would also like to thank the Special Representative, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her intervention, and especially for the exemplary work she is carrying out with the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. I would like to assure them of the full support of my delegation. Our thanks go too to Ms. Rhoda Misak, who compellingly gave voice to civil society — an indispensable partner in the fight against sexual violence. I fully associate myself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Since our last open debate on sexual violence in June 2013 (see S/PV.6984), new conflicts have broken out and others have intensified. The magnitude of the phenomenon has intensified proportionately, showing, unfortunately, that sexual violence goes hand in hand with conflict. I refer to the conflict in Darfur, which continues to deteriorate, and to that in South Sudan, where, as Ms. Misak has just outlined, the fighting that erupted since 15 December 2013 has led to serious violations of human rights, including a great number of cases of sexual violence. I refer, too, to the Central African Republic, where sexual violence has been the main feature of the attacks carried out against the civilian population since March 2013.

In Syria, sexual violence has been a constant since the beginning of the conflict. The independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic gathered information showing that Government forces and affiliated militias have committed sexual violence, including rape, in detention centres and prisons across the country, often during interrogations conducted by intelligence services. We also know that certain armed groups in Syria have also committed such violence. All of these conflicts and the other situations addressed in the annual report of the Secretary-General lead us to the conclusion that the Security Council must remain mobilized in the face of these despicable practices that deliberately target civilian populations and destroy the social fabric of entire communities.

Last year's open debate focused on the fight against impunity. That topic remains relevant. It is at the heart of our efforts to end sexual violence. Condemning the perpetrators of sexual violence does not mean only punishing the guilty parties but also preventing future violence, righting wrongs and doing justice by victims and survivors. The international community must step up its efforts to support national authorities to assume their responsibility in the fight against impunity.

The partnership between Justice Rapid Response, UN-Women and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations is a good example of what can be done. Luxembourg supports that partnership, which has made it possible to establish a list of specialized experts who can be rapidly deployed to lead and participate in investigations and to provide assistance to the victims of acts of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings.

Along with strengthening national capacities, there must be continued support for international criminal justice so it can play its role in cases where States either fail to live up to their obligations or lack the will to do so. I would like to reiterate the importance that Luxembourg attaches to the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Security Council is responsible for considering all of the means at its disposal to combat sexual violence, including referral to the ICC.

In recent years, the information available to us on cases of sexual violence has increased in both quantity and quality. Procedures for the monitoring, analysis and communication of information on sexual violence have begun to be implemented following the adoption of resolution 1960 (2010). It would be advisable to accelerate the implementation of those procedures, as envisaged in resolution 2106 (2013). It is also critical

that advisors on the protection of women continue to be deployed in a systematic way. The Security Council should also ensure that it systematically takes into account the prevention of sexual violence in framing country-specific resolutions and in considering the renewal of the mandates of peacekeeping missions and special policy missions.

We commend and applaud the efforts of the United Nations campaign against sexual violence in conflict, headed by Ms. Bangura, in particular the preparation of early warning indicators for cases of conflict-related sexual violence addressed by United Nations missions in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

The struggle against sexual violence can succeed only if the States concerned, the United Nations and all its Member States mobilize and unify their efforts. In that context, we welcome the signature on the sidelines of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. That initiative, which has since been endorsed by more than 140 countries, shows the will of the international community to put an end to that scourge. We hope that the June follow-up Global Summit in London will lead to the adoption of further specific commitments.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that Luxembourg will maintain its firm commitment to ensuring that the struggle against sexual violence is taken into account as a priority by the Council and that the Council's resolutions are translated into solutions on the ground, to borrow Ms. Bangura's expression.