

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Resolution 1888
Wednesday, 30 September, 2009

Statement by H.E. Mr. Heller, Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for joining us at this important meeting of the Security Council. We would also like to welcome to the Council Chamber Mr. Bedouma Alain Yoda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, and Mr. Alain Joyandet, Minister of State for Cooperation and Francophonie of France.

I would like in particular to welcome you, Madam Secretary of State, and to acknowledge your personal commitment and leadership, which have created renewed impetus for the issue of the protection of women's rights and the prevention of all forms of violence against women. My delegation would also like to thank the delegation of the United States for leading negotiations on resolution 1888 (2009), which has just been adopted.

With the unanimous adoption of that resolution, the Security Council has reaffirmed its commitment to the protection of women in armed conflict. The significant number of delegations that joined in sponsoring this initiative shows that the international community is resolved to ensure that women and children no longer remain the principal victims of the armed conflicts which, deplorably, are occurring in many parts of the world.

Council members were able to see for ourselves the gravity of the acts of sexual violence against women and children in areas of armed conflict in the course of our visit to a number of African countries last May, in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On that occasion we witnessed the consequences of these crimes for societies and their negative impact on efforts to find solutions to crisis situations and promote an effective process of national reconciliation. For that reason we wish to reiterate, as does resolution 1888 (2009), the primary obligation of all parties to an armed conflict to respect and to enforce at all times international humanitarian law, which grants special protection to women and children.

My delegation believes that the establishment of the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict will make it possible to improve the systematic and comprehensive attention that the United Nations pays in response to sexual violence in these situations.

This new mandate should work in a coordinated manner with other United Nations mechanisms and agencies in order to harness synergies and to prevent duplication. In particular, there is a broad relationship between the objectives of resolution 1888 (2009) and resolution 1882 (2009), on children and armed conflict, which was adopted by the Security Council last August.

These common objectives must be duly explored with a view to providing comprehensive protection for all those who, due to their condition, suffer most from the consequences of armed conflict, that is, women and children. In the light of the aforementioned, we believe that the Security Council must also pay close attention to the ongoing negotiations on a composite gender entity within the framework of the General Assembly and decide to review the mandate of the Special Representative in a reasonable period of time and in the light of the results of the procedure outlined in General Assembly resolution 63/311.

While more can be done at the international level in order to prevent sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, the eradication of sexual violence will only be achieved if national capacities among those States that are addressing situations of conflict are improved with a view to bringing the perpetrators of such crimes to justice.

Therefore, one of the most relevant aspects of the resolution is the identification within the United Nations of a multidisciplinary team of experts who, when their assistance is required and with the consent of the State concerned, can be deployed to the field in order to work jointly with the Government and the United Nations system to undertake projects for technical cooperation to strengthen the rule of law, prevent impunity and address victims' needs.

It is clear that currently we have strong tools for preventing sexual violence in areas of conflict. The true challenge that we face is making full use of this array of instruments, if we truly wish to ensure that more women and children do not fall victim to the spiral of violence that is caused by armed conflict.