

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

Statement by Mr. Loulichki, Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations.

I would like to thank you, Madam President, for presiding over this meeting and for enabling us to discuss important aspects of the issue of preventing conflict twice in three days. These two debates (see S/PV.6946) are inextricably connected, given the fact that the problem of sexual violence is deeply rooted in conflict and not merely an incidental symptom of it. The short period during which these discussions have taken place has served to sow the seeds of the success of your presidency for the month of April. By the same token, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in achieving this lofty and noble goal. I would also like to thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as Ms. Saran Keïta Diakit  of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their exhaustive briefings and complete and concrete efforts in this area.

We have carefully studied the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/149) in the context of today's discussion. In that connection, we would like to express our appreciation for the information it contains, as well as for its conclusions, which should give powerful impetus to and pave the way for efforts aimed at curbing sexual violence against women, children and the elderly in armed conflict. The report describes the achievements of the States concerned in complying with the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as in taking measures to prevent sexual violence. It also mentions a number of legal and institutional obstacles that stand in the way of achieving the ideal of full protection for women and children in conflict, as well as incorporating and integrating them into the fabric of society.

The Kingdom of Morocco commends the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, particularly in the area of fostering and preserving the progress that has been made, as well as for affirming the shared responsibility of society for combating sexual violence. By the same token, we commend the United Nations initiative on combating sexual violence so as to help those working in peacekeeping operations, as well as to create partnerships between the United Nations and interested parties for strengthening national competence and skills in order to help curb sexual violence committed by parties to a conflict and to protect and support survivors. Implementing such partnerships, and the provision of adequate resources for their effective use, will contribute to achieving these humanitarian goals. By the same token, we would also like to emphasize the importance of taking into consideration the various views and standpoints, and of consulting with the relevant States concerning the establishment of early detection mechanisms for preventing sexual violence.

With regard to the implementation of reporting and oversight mechanisms — and in accordance with resolution 1960 (2010), as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General — we hope that such measures will serve as the basis for evidence-based actions. Such measures should be objective and meticulous in monitoring sexual violence in conflict and should be carried out in an atmosphere of complete objectivity and independence. They should also primarily relate to Security Council resolutions, aim at supporting international efforts to protect women and girls in conflict and underscore the importance of preventing such crimes.

With regard to prevention, the report of the Secretary-General states that the establishment of refugee camps near conflict areas and the difficulty of gaining access to them, in addition to the lack of registration records for refugees, impede efforts to safeguard refugees and to alleviate their daily suffering.

The protection of refugees is the responsibility of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and of host countries. The protection of refugees constitutes a significant part of UNHCR functions, in addition to identifying and registering them. The needs of refugees must be met and services must be provided to them to guarantee their freedom of movement and expression. They should not be subjected to humanitarian or political blackmail.

Rape and conflict-related sexual violence have deep repercussions for victims, survivors and families. The psychological, social and economic effects increase the marginalization of those groups from society with regard to their access to social and medical services. The signing of peace agreements and ceasefires by parties to a conflict should lead to developing programmes that result in an immediate cessation of sexual violence. Addressing that phenomenon is a main peacebuilding pillar agreed to by the parties.

Committing to combating impunity, implementing cooperation programmes with the judiciary to try perpetrators, and providing reparations to victims of sexual violence constitute the necessary safeguards to ensure that such crimes will not recur. Commitments in that regard must be implemented on the ground; that is a fundamental element in preventing the crimes.

In many countries, developing codes of conduct for security and police forces is very important to providing comprehensive protection from sexual violence. In that connection, I wish to acknowledge the efforts made by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict while taking into consideration factors related to national expertise and experience, with a view to reforming the judiciary and facilitating access to it for victims.

Achieving the desired objectives in curbing sexual violence requires the involvement of all parties and the efforts of public authorities, national human rights organizations and every component of civil society, including women's associations, so as to mobilize the necessary efforts to put an end to that scourge. To that end, there must be sufficient technical support and financing from donors.

Sexual violence against women and children in conflict is a crime against the dignity, innocence and humanity of those vulnerable groups. We should not remain silent or condone such crimes or diminish their serious consequences.

Furthermore, sexual violence in conflict threatens social stability and hampers national reconciliation and the unity of a society in the post-conflict stage. We have a long way to go, but that should not dissuade the international community from tackling this scourge on all levels and with all the means available.