

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

Statement by Mr. Masood Khan, Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations.

We thank Rwanda for convening this open debate on women and peace and security. Your presence here, Madam President, shows your country's strong commitment to addressing the scourge of sexual violence in wars and in situations of armed conflict. We welcome Vice-Minister Cho Tae-yul's attendance at the Council debate today.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing to the Council. The Secretary-General has placed women's protection issues high on his agenda and has put the power of the United Nations behind the efforts to combat heinous acts of violence against women.

Women bear the brunt of wars and armed conflicts. Today, 90 per cent of the casualties in conflicts and wars are non-combatants, of whom 70 per cent are women and children. Moreover, women are left out of peacemaking, stabilization and reconstruction processes.

Women and girls are targeted deliberately. Sexual and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict affects the dignity not only of victims and survivors but also of families, communities and societies. It causes moral and psychosocial injury and is used as a tactic of war to force the displacement of populations and to illegally acquire natural resources.

Resolution 1325 (2000) recognized that disproportionate impact on women and introduced remedial measures. Member States have resolved to collectively oppose and fight the unconscionable practices of rape, sexual slavery, commercial sexual exploitation, forced pregnancies, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence.

We welcome Special Representative Zainab Hawa Bangura's exhaustive briefing today. We pay tribute to her for her solid work and for the passion with which she pursues her mission. We appreciate the presence and testimony of the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Civil society has a crucial role in protecting the rights of women in conflict situations.

The United Nations does much to deal with the protection of women in situations of armed conflict. We all know that that is not enough. Much more needs to be done. It is imperative to continue to mainstream the gender perspective into peacekeeping operations. As the largest troop-contributing country, we can testify to the fact that the appointment of gender advisers in the field has served a useful purpose. That practice must be strengthened. We are proud of our women peacekeepers, who have served as police officers, doctors and nurses in peacekeeping operations in Asia, Africa and the Balkans. We have made gender sensitization a mandatory part of the training of our peacekeepers.

Over the years, the Security Council has paid close attention to the cause of protecting the human rights of vulnerable groups in situations of armed conflict. The issue of women and peace and security has been integrated into the Council's country-specific resolutions. That increased emphasis has resulted in a normative framework that is reflected in a series of resolutions on women and children, as well as the creation of the posts of special representatives of the Secretary-General to deal with the issues of children and sexual violence. The Secretary-General has reflected those concerns in various reports. Over time, communication among the field offices, the Secretariat and the Council has also improved.

Such mechanisms and measures have provided relief and justice to the affected populations, but it is

a long haul. In that context, we support Special Representative Bangura's call to all parties to conflicts to immediately put an end to violence against women and make specific, time-bound commitments to ensure the non-recurrence of such acts, under the appropriate monitoring mechanisms.

The six-point priority agenda of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is a good way to address impunity, empower women to seek redress, strengthen the international political response and foster national ownership. Moreover, the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) will meaningfully address the plight of women and will elevate their status to equal partners in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction, peace and security. Women should participate in recovery and peacebuilding, as well as transitional justice systems.

The Council has set a good example by sending strong signals that sexual and gender-based violence is unacceptable. We should give due credit to the Security Council for transforming the protection of women in armed conflict situations from a soft to a hard issue. Full compliance with international humanitarian law, an end to impunity, and accountability for the perpetrators of crimes against women, including in transitional justice mechanisms, are now widely accepted norms of international law.

In order to give more credence to its actions, the Council must be ready to take targeted and graduated measures, through the relevant Sanctions Committees, against perpetrators of sexual violence. We endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation of applying specific sanctions against parties to armed conflict that use sexual violence as a tactic of war.

We believe that the Member States concerned bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for preventing and addressing sexual violence. We urge the Special Representative to continue to work closely with Member States and regional organizations to ensure that such concerns are addressed.

The continued appointment of trained gender and women protection advisers and the provision of multisectoral assistance and services for victims have proved beneficial. Adequate resources must be allocated for that purpose.

We support the Special Representative's call to strengthen national institutions in order to provide sustainable assistance to victims of sexual violence. Technical assistance may be provided, on request, to concerned States for reforming and rebuilding the judicial, legislative and electoral sectors, as well as for the economic, social and political empowerment of women.

In conclusion, I would say that punitive measures do not provide all the answers. We must invest in consciousness-raising, dialogue and engagement. Societies in conflict must address the root causes, resolve their differences and avoid hurting their own communities and nations or fellow human beings across borders. Humanity and humanitarianism, not primordial barbarism, must prevail.