



Permanent Mission of Portugal
to the United Nations

Open Debate of the Security Council

on

“Women, Peace and Security – (res. 1888)”

Statement by
H.E. Ambassador José Filipe Moraes Cabral
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

New York, 16-17 December 2010

(Check against delivery)

Madame President,
Excellencies, distinguished participants,

I would like to thank you, Mme President, and the USA for your initiative to convene this open debate. I would also like to thank Ms Margot Wallström, the Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict, for presenting the report of the Secretary General. I commend all Council members for the adoption by consensus of resolution 1960 that Portugal has cosponsored. This action oriented resolution is already a landmark and I am convinced that will make a real difference, especially for women and girls, in so many parts of the world.

Portugal, obviously, shares the views that will be expressed by the EU later on regarding the implementation of this resolution but let me underline some aspects of particular significance to my country.

The excellent report before us today provides us with a clear analytical framing of sexual violence in conflict as a threat to security and an impediment to peacebuilding in situations on the Council's agenda. It also examines the causes and consequences of sexual violence in local communities as well as its consequences to the conflict and to the peace process itself; moreover this report provides us with very useful information on significant progress made to implement resolutions 1820 and 1888 with the appointment of the SRSG on sexual violence in conflict but also with the establishment of a team of experts on the rule of law, as requested by resolution 1888, in order to assist national authorities to reinforce judicial systems weakened by conflict.

We must recognize that much has been done. The legal framework exists: under international law, the definition of sexual violence is clear and, depending on the circumstances, can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, act of torture or constituent act of genocide. These crimes may entail individual criminal responsibility including that of commanders. With the appointment of SRSG Wallström and, subsequently, the appointment of a team of experts on the rule of law, with the presence of UN agencies and Peacekeeping missions in the field, the Council should have the necessary tools to obtain reliable and accurate information on sexual violence. This is an issue of particular importance for the Council to discharge its responsibilities.

Concerning the Council's action on this issue, we believe that the Council has been quite successful but that it still needs to reinforce its effectiveness. The mass rapes in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in July and August emphasize the need for further action by the international community. We can certainly consolidate and make full use of existing tools, namely by ensuring adequate funding for the office of the Special Representative and for the team of experts on the rule of law but also by assessing the need for women's protection advisers in relevant peacekeeping operations.

I would underline two aspects where the Council could become more effective:

- The first aspect is the need to improve the Council's access to timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on sexual violence in situations on its agenda. In this regard, Portugal strongly supports the recommendations contained in the report of the SG [and

the decision taken yesterday by the Council] to establish a monitoring and reporting system on sexual violence in conflict to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach at field level and at headquarters; the good practices of the mechanisms created by the Council to monitor the situation of children in armed conflicts should guide our action and we hope that these mechanisms will have the same level of success to combat sexual violence in armed conflicts.

- The second aspect is the Council's action. Indeed, a Council which is better informed is also in a better position to take action. With sufficient information, the Council will be able to take, in a timely manner, further steps to influence parties to conflict to comply with international law and to make specific commitments regarding the prevention of sexual violence or the investigation of alleged abuses; however, if these measures do not restrain perpetration of sexual violence, the Council needs to follow-up on resolution 1888. In this regard, Portugal welcomes the decision of the Council to use information available in the reports of the SG as a basis for a more focused UN engagement with those responsible for such acts. This should be understood as a clear message to perpetrators of sexual violence that the Council is ready to apply sanctions to perpetrators that have been identified or that are credibly suspected of committing sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on its agenda.

I thank you for your attention.
