

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

Statement by Mr. Churkin, Permanent Mission of Russian Federation to the United Nations.

We would like to once again welcome you, Madam Minister, as you preside over this meeting, which we thank you for organizing. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflicts, Ms. Bangura. As we can see, thanks to her persistence and commitment to the goal of eradicating sexual violence, the Special Representative has managed, in less than a year, to do quite a bit.

The consideration of the issues relating to women and peace and security should be based on a comprehensive approach, as set forth in the Council's baseline resolution on the matter, namely, resolution 1325 (2000). The varied nature of the violence that occurs during armed conflict requires that attention be paid to all its manifestations. Unquestionably, sexual violence must be roundly condemned and severely punished. We believe this problem is very real, particularly in specific conflict situations where such crimes are becoming increasingly widespread.

However, as we know, not all such situations pose a threat to international peace and security requiring intervention on the part of the Security Council. Because of that, we feel that issues relating to preventing and combating sexual violence at every stage of armed conflict or post-conflict situations are primarily the responsibility of national Governments. Moreover, questions concerning combating sexual violence, depending on the context and within the framework of existing mandates, are handled not only by the Council but by other United Nations organs, particularly the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Commission on the Status of Women. Artificially linking every issue of sexual violence to the work of the Security Council would lead not only to an imbalance from the standpoint of system-wide coordination but would have a negative impact on the effectiveness of work in that area. We believe that priority attention should be given to those situations on the Security Council's agenda where sexual violence is one of the primary issues in terms of the protection of civilians.

Combating sexual violence is also an important component of the range of measures needed in peace processes and post-conflict restoration. This type of crime is not a root cause of armed conflict, but rather a result of prevailing impunity. We believe that crimes committed require mandatory punishment, whether they be acts of sexual violence, terrorism or indiscriminate or disproportionate force. After all, the victims of all such acts are totally innocent people.

We have studied with interest the report of the Secretary-General for this meeting (S/2013/149). The first thing that strikes us is the document's thoroughness and the scale of the work done by the Special Representative. However, the contents of the document raises some questions. As we see it, in order to set up a genuinely credible discussion of such a sensitive issue, it is essential to act dispassionately, based on objective and reliable information. For instance, responsibility for sexual crimes in Syria is laid at the door only of the Government forces and their supporters. Analogous crimes committed by representatives of the opposition are touched on only in passing, despite the numerous assertions that have been made about them.

The principle behind the selection of the countries mentioned in various sections of the report is unclear. For instance, in the section on current and emerging concerns regarding sexual violence as it relates to international peace and security, besides countries that are on the Council's agenda, situations in a number of other States are also highlighted. It is striking that, in a significant number of the cases cited in the report of sexual violence in various parts of the world, the issue at times is not one of trends or systematic practices of sexual violence but of isolated incidents. Further

investigation of many such incidents reveals that they are more likely to be criminally punishable acts committed by criminal groups, rather than war crimes.

The scope of the work done under Security Council auspices in this area was agreed to based on an intergovernmental process and enshrined in the relevant Council resolutions. We therefore feel that it involves the consideration of issues relating to sexual violence in armed conflict. We appeal to the Special Representative to adhere to the Council's mandate in carrying out her work. We do not see a need for establishing a special procedure or body for monitoring the compliance of parties to a conflict with obligations to combat sexual violence. As we see it, the current mechanisms in this area are sufficient. First among those is the Special Representative of the Secretary- General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, while the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict also plays a significant role. As I stated previously, we believe issues of sexual violence must be considered in the Security Council only in the context of the agenda item on women and peace and security, and in connection with the subject of the maintenance of peace and security.

In conclusion, we would again like to emphasize that the efforts of the international community will be in vain without the consent and active participation of national Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for dealing with the whole range of problems surrounding the protection of peoples in armed conflict.