

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber**  
*Statement by Mr. Gasana Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations.*

I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this important open debate.

I would also like to convey my sincere gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their respective statements. Under their leadership, the silence has been broken surrounding the crime of sexual and gender-based violence, and they have rallied the Security Council to put in place a normative framework. But as Ms. Bangura has consistently stated, sexual violence continues to be pervasive in crisis. We also wish to acknowledge the statement made by Ms. Rhoda Misaka, representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

A few years ago, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda established that rape and other forms of sexual violence were used as a weapon of war during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

Although no one can tell the true number of the victims of rape during the genocide, it is reported that between 100,000 and 250,000 women were raped. Some of those women survived with scars, some with incurable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. The consequence of those heinous crimes is beyond description. Nevertheless, the perpetrators of those crimes in Rwanda, now acting under the umbrella of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, continued their mayhem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where they terrorized communities and committed rape against women and girls.

Sexual violence is also a reality in Syria, the Central African Republic and many other conflict areas. In South Sudan, the radio is even used to call for the rape of women based on their ethnicity. We totally agree with Ms. Bangura that sexual violence in conflict needs to be treated as a war crime, not as an unfortunate collateral damage of war. It is therefore up to us as Member States to end this scourge.

It must be made clear that sexual violence is not only a United Nations issue but an issue that requires the leadership, national ownership and responsibility of States. National ownership is imperative because it is at the national level that Governments create a platform for awareness and outreach against those crimes. Governments, whether in conflict or at peace, have a primary responsibility to prevent any acts of sexual violence against women, children and men, and to ensure accountability for such crimes. That responsibility is transferred to non-State actors under whose control civilians are.

We call on the established United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to continue supporting national institutions to strengthen their response in addressing sexual violence.

Ending impunity for those who commit sexual violence during conflict should be our collective effort and goal.

Along the same lines, the Council should ensure that all country reports and mandate renewals evaluate the level of protection and promotion of women's human rights, as set out in several Security Council resolutions.

In that regard, I totally agreed with what our colleague Prince Zeid that rapes perpetrated by United Nations civilian staff while on a peacekeeping mission cannot and should not go unpunished.

As the Council discusses options for the United Nations engagement in several conflict-stricken countries where the situation continues to worsen, with women bearing the brunt of the conflict and with human rights violations increasing, the United Nations presence should have a robust mandate to protect civilians. Protecting those in need should be given priority by ensuring that we take full measures, in particular to

provide more effective protection to the civilian population at risk, to create the conditions for humanitarian assistance and to allow the investigation of violations and abuses. All peacekeepers should be trained on gender issues and ways to support victims of rape before deploying to peace operations.

On our part, Rwanda has adopted predeployment courses for all our troops that include lessons related to sexual and gender-based violence. In the same vein, we call for the deployment of gender advisers, women protection advisers and child protection advisers in all United Nations peacekeeping missions to focus on violations and abuses committed against women and children, including all forms of sexual violence in armed conflicts.

Needless to say, the fight against impunity and accountability is key to eradicate the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. The Security Council should reinforce its efforts to ensure that investigations and prosecutions are carried out through the national justice systems when possible, or through various international justice mechanisms. Regardless of any debate we may have, our main objective is to ensure that justice is done for the victims, which can also serve as a deterrent for all belligerents.

In conclusion, allow me to restate our understanding that sexual violence in conflict, like any other growing violent trend, is a criminal practice that we can eradicate if we have the political will. We strongly believe that our joint efforts can yield tangible results and create a changed environment on the ground for those affected by that terrible scourge. My delegation will continue to support and work closely with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in the implementation of its mandate.