

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 2014, Security Council Chamber**

Statement by Ms. Čolaković, Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations

I thank you, Madam President for organizing this important and timely debate. Our thanks also go to all of today's speakers. We take their remarks very seriously.

Bosnia and Herzegovina aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union.

At the outset, I will quote the Secretary-General's statement of 1 October in Geneva to the Executive Committee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: "Never before in United Nations history have we had so many refugees, displaced people and asylum-seekers. Never before has the United Nations been asked to reach so many with emergency food assistance and other life-saving support."

In the context of these alarming words, we want to express our deep concerns about heavy civilian casualties, massive displacements of population, serious human rights violations and worsening humanitarian situations in several parts of the world. We are distressed by the global trends report, which shows that 51.2 million people were forcibly displaced in 2013 alone. In the same year, 2.5 million people from one single country — Syria — became refugees and 6.5 million became internally displaced persons (IDPs). Furthermore, all statistics shows that women and children, who make up the majority of refugees and IDPs, are the most vulnerable part of the population. We had the same situation in the 1990s during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bearing all this in mind we strongly call upon the entire international community, the United Nations and major players and stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive response to the current crisis in order to protect civilians and human rights. We recognize the achievements made at the normative level through the adoption of resolutions 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013), and we especially welcome the commitments made in the areas of woman, peace and security regarding the situation of refugees, IDPs and stateless women and girls.

We appreciate the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and all her activities to highlight the need for more sustainable protection of women and girls in that regard. A crucial element in women's protection is the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and all international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law. In that regard, we strongly support the work, activities and role of UN-Women and all its initiatives.

My country is committed to the provisions of the declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Eight in London in 2013. We believe that the prosecution of sexual violence crimes, as well as national ownership and responsibility in

addressing of the root causes of sexual violence in armed conflict, are central to preventing such acts. Sexual violence in conflict cannot be accepted as a cultural phenomenon. Bearing in mind that sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations affects women and girls, as well as men and

boys, we see it as the most brutal manifestation of discrimination against the human being. The victims very often have to fight outside factors — such as social stigma, where the victims are blamed and penalized — yet perpetrators are free to lead a normal life. Therefore, we advocate the importance of victims' access to justice in conflict and post-conflict situations.

My country has a track record of action to implement resolution 1325 (2000), and we were the first country in Central Eastern Europe to develop and comprehensively implement a national action plan. For example, our plan requires that a zero-tolerance approach be applied to any form of illicit sexual behaviour on the part of peacekeeping personnel. In this context, we would like to stress the importance of recent tangible changes in the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions, which includes monitoring training for peacekeepers in the prevention of violence against women refugees and IDPs.

Integrating a gender perspective into peacekeeping policies, the promotion of women's participation in peacekeeping operations, and the deployment of women protection advisers to missions is fundamental to a more effective performance on the ground. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a police- and troop-contributing country. The authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have adopted a policy to ensure that one-third of the nominated candidates for peacekeeping missions are women.

Accordingly, among the deployed police officers from my country in South Sudan, Liberia and Cyprus, 21 per cent are female. Women peacekeepers have an operational advantage by empowering local women, girls and society as a whole. Education should be one of the priorities, as refugees and displaced girls are often short-changed on education. We want to highlight this issue as an essential to ensuring the safety and empowerment of the individual.

Finally, we would like to point out that the time has come to strongly convert our commitments and promises into real actions on the ground in order to prevent violence, protect individuals, punish perpetrators and provide redress to victims. My country stands ready to contribute to those efforts.