

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

*Statement by Mr. Rishchynski, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations*

I thank you very much, Madam President, for organizing this debate and for your presence here today.

Equality between women and men, and the full and meaningful participation of women and girls in all aspects of the life of their communities and countries, is at the core of Canadian values. Canada is committed to protecting and promoting the human rights, empowerment and well-being of women and girls around the world. We are concerned about the dire situation in countries where the barriers to a life of dignity for women and girls undermine their safety and security, preventing them from reaching their potential. Not only does that affect the fate of those women and girls, it affects the fate of entire communities.

Girls must be protected and educated if they are to grow and become full and contributing members of their society. Women must be empowered to become active members of their communities and to contribute to all decision-making, including in the political, economic and peace processes. It is only through women's empowerment that countries can reach their full potential and prosperity. It is not enough to have issues affecting women and girls discussed in the halls of power; women must be in those halls, at the head of the table, talking about security and prosperity in terms of their own experience.

Canada is also committed to improving maternal, infant and child health around the world, and to bringing an end within one generation to the highly destructive practice of the early and forced marriage of children. Eliminating all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence, is an integral part of the future security and development of communities and countries. We commend countries that defend those causes with similar determination. We are constantly made aware of the ways in which armed conflict further jeopardizes women's and children's security, dignity, health and development. For example, in times of war it is often impossible to access basic maternal and neonatal health services. The most vulnerable are too often the biggest targets.

Women and girls are at an increased risk of violence in humanitarian crises and are often subject to abuse, including in exchange for assistance or protection. Refugee and displaced families are known to force marriage on their daughters in badly misplaced attempts to provide for their security or in response to their daughters' rape. Rape is all too often used as a weapon of war, with devastating effects on the victims, their families and their communities that can endure long after the conflict ends.

The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has taken sexual violence in conflict to a horrifying new level of depravity. Women and girls from ethnic and religious minorities are being raped, forced into marriage and openly sold as slaves. Canada is at the forefront of international

efforts to address the situation in Iraq and will continue to collaborate with like-minded partners in responding to the crisis. We are contributing to humanitarian assistance for those in need, including refugees and displaced persons, and we have committed more than \$62 million in humanitarian, stabilization and security programming. Most important, however, our commitment includes up to \$10 million to support survivors of sexual violence in ISIL-held areas, including supplying funding for Justice Rapid Response and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to respond to and investigate sexual violence and other serious abuses. The perpetrators of those crimes must be held to account.

A disproportionate number of women and girls are suffering in conflict situations today and are unable to play a significant role as agents of resilience and positive change. Their full participation in the lives of their communities and countries is essential to sustainable prosperity, peace and development. The international community is addressing the problem through, for example, today's debate, as well as at such events as the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, recently held in London.

In 2015 we will have further chances to address those important matters in several initiatives, including the planned global study of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the Secretary-General's high-level review of the agenda on women and peace and security. We will also have reviews of our peacebuilding architecture and of the post-2015 development agenda. The role of women and girls is essential to all of this work, and Canada looks forward to continuing its engagement with the United Nations and its agencies, and with like-minded Member States, to ensure follow-through.