

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Beck, Permanent Mission of Solomon Island to the United Nations.*

Let me, first of all acknowledge your country's leadership, Sir, in convening this open debate on women and peace and security, with special emphasis on sexual violence in conflict zones. Solomon Islands is contributing to the debate as a country emerging from conflict. While stamping out sexual violence from any conflict is our global responsibility, the primary responsibility, as rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, rests with States. Solomon Islands continues to tackle the issue of sexual violence in the context of its gender-based violence national framework.

Solomon Islands is a culturally diverse country of more than half a million people who speak 87 different languages. We have also established the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, as well as the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs.

As Council members may be aware, Solomon Islands continues to work in partnership with the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which is led by Australia, one of the sitting members of the Council. The Regional Assistance Mission is also supported by New Zealand and all of the neighbouring Pacific small island developing States. The Regional Assistance Mission is provided for under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. My country extends its sincere gratitude to all its Pacific neighbours.

The success of the Solomon Islands/RAMSI partnership in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking speaks for itself. My country's economy has been growing over the years. After 10 years of operations, the Regional Assistance Mission is undergoing a transitional phase. The military component will be withdrawing from the country, while the police and civilian components will remain.

The Solomon Islands Police Force has a new look, thanks to special outreach efforts to women in terms of recruitment. Today, the acting head of our Police Force is a woman, a first for Solomon Islands. It is a small step, but an important one. Even more, it is fulfilling one of the six goals of UN-Women, that is, strengthening the leadership of women in peace and security.

That also speaks of the rich experience that the women of my country have gained during the height of our ethnic conflict. They appealed for peace, as women in parts of the country suffered from sexual violence.

We just completed the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women last month, whose agreed conclusions speak of how violent the world has become. Seven out of 10 women suffer from gender violence. Sexual violence, unfortunately, has gone viral. Two out of three women in Solomon Islands suffer from gender-based violence. Solomon Islands has responded by establishing a specific policy on the elimination of gender violence as a subsidiary of our gender equality and women's development policy.

The elimination of gender-based violence is a shared responsibility. We are tackling the issues, working with all stakeholders to address the issue of rape and sexual violence with a strong campaign to prevent it, protect victims and deal with perpetrators. Solomon Islands has institutionalized Government-wide structures to deal with the issue nationally, working with all the relevant stakeholders. We have in place a national steering committee to monitor the progress in the implementation of the policy, which reports to the national task force.

Solomon Islands is also a member of the g7+ countries promoting the New Deal agreed to in Busan. We hope that that framework will address the root causes of conflicts.

Let me conclude by highlighting one of the challenges facing our world today, namely, climate change. Climate change cuts across all three pillars of the multilateral system and is serving to disempower women, especially as land is being swallowed up by the rise in sea-levels. To date, the Organization's response to disaster-risk management has been directed to sudden-onset events, rather than to the slow-onset events such as climate change. We hope to see a change of approach in that area. Finally, Solomon Islands would like to say that we join others in condemning sexual violence, wherever it may occur.