

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

Statement by Mr. Govender, Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations.

We congratulate Rwanda on assuming the presidency of the Council and express our appreciation to Ms. Louise Mushikiwabo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, for joining us today. We join others in commending the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for the contributions she has made in such a short space of time since taking up her position.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2013/149) underscores the reality that sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict settings remains systemic and widespread, where women and girls continue to bear the greater burden of the consequences of conflict. It is with that in mind that my delegation reaffirms our commitment to the full and effective implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010) as the building blocks for advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

My delegation notes with concern the emerging challenges highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General. They include, among others, increasing incidents of sexual violence committed against men and boys, particularly in the context of detention, the practice of forced marriage by armed groups, and the linkages between sexual violence and illicit natural resource extraction.

My delegation is pleased at the progress made on the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements and on their potential to serve as an early-warning and conflict-prevention tool. A continuous review of the impact that women protection advisers make in the field would be instructive for closing the protection gaps in the context of sexual violence in conflict. It is also our view that women protection advisers could add value to peacekeeping mission assessment visits.

My delegation supports the recommendation by the Secretary-General that sexual violence in conflict be reflected in all the relevant country resolutions, as well as in authorizations and renewals of the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions. Equally, we will continue to advocate for the inclusion of sexual violence in the definition of acts prohibited by ceasefires and that it be monitored as part of ceasefire monitoring mechanisms. In that regard, we also highlight the important contribution that women can and must make in all processes of conflict resolution and in post-conflict settings.

We also reaffirm our commitment to support efforts by the Secretary-General towards the implementation of the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Justice for the victims of serious violations of international human rights law is an essential requirement for the sustainable peace, security and development of States emerging from armed conflict, where the rule of law must enjoy primacy and be scrupulously upheld. Therefore, my delegation supports efforts by the Council to continue fighting impunity for the most serious crimes committed against women and children through the work of the International Criminal Court, ad hoc and mixed tribunals and specialized chambers in national tribunals.

We recognize the importance of women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict settings, including through gender-responsive legal, judicial and security sector reform and other mechanisms. In that regard, my delegation appreciates the commendable work undertaken by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. However, we believe that significantly more

needs to be done by all the relevant actors in supporting countries to increase women's participation, leadership and expertise in transitional justice, as well as in advancing accountability measures for serious offences committed against women and children.

We support efforts undertaken by the Council towards ensuring that more systematic attention be given to the implementation of women, peace and security commitments in its own work. The integration of appropriate gender perspectives into the mandates of the relevant peacekeeping missions, as well as in other thematic areas of peace and security, would positively advance that objective.

Much work needs to be done to narrow the substantive implementation deficits that still remain. The burden of responsibility rests on the stakeholder community, including the Council, to ensure measurable progress on the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions in the broader context of the women, peace and security agenda and the laudable objectives it aspires to achieve.