

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict
16th-17th December 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by H.E. Mr. Juan Pablo de Laiglesia, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations

Spain aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union. As this is the first time that I address the Security Council as the new Permanent Representative of Spain, I would like first to express my gratitude for the opportunity to take part in this debate.

Sexual violence in situations of conflict, like gender-based violence in the home, has remained in the private sphere for far too long. In his report (S/2010/604) on the implementation of resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009), the Secretary-General affirms that sexual violence used as a weapon of war can become a way of life that continues once the conflict has ended. All too often, such violence is invisible and thereby protected because it is considered a private aspect of interpersonal relationships. However, we cannot forget that it is a crime of war, a crime against humanity and a flagrant breach of human rights.

The situation is exacerbated by the intolerable impunity that many perpetrators of those crimes enjoy, which allows the problem to be perpetuated over time and prevents it from being fought effectively. Combating that impunity should indeed be our main priority and tried in the appropriate forums, including the International Criminal Court.

The body of standards established by resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), as well as 1960 (2010), adopted yesterday by the Council, is the main tool for combating sexual violence in conflict. The institutional structure being set up, and led by Special Representative Ms. Margot Wallström, is also essential. However, as became obvious at the thematic debate held by the Security Council (see S/PV.6411) on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), a body of standards will not be enough if measures are not applied and implemented. The new resolution should lead the United Nations as a whole to combat sexual violence in situations of conflict even more decisively, ensuring the perfect coordination of the activities of the various bodies and relevant entities, including, of course, the new entity UN Women.

My delegation supports the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, and co-sponsored the resolution submitted to the Council. My Government also supports the Special Representative's agenda of priorities and considers it very important to continue training peace contingents to combat sexual violence and to consolidate the institutional structure set out in the resolutions, ensuring that they have the necessary financing.

My Government is completing the second review of our national action plan on women and peace and security, bringing it into line with the provisions of recent Security Council resolutions and broadening its provisions on sexual violence in conflict. In that regard, I am pleased to report three actions that we have recently undertaken.

First, in cooperation with the Government of the Netherlands, we have launched a joint civilian-military training exercise on gender-based violence and the protection of civilians, as mentioned yesterday by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands in his statement. Secondly, Spanish cooperation funds activities promoted by civil society to combat sexual violence in situations of conflict in Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil. Finally, in June, the Spanish criminal code was amended to include a specific penalty for those violating the sexual freedom of a protected person in the context of armed conflict.

The international community must continue to combat sexual violence in conflict at the national, regional and global levels. We must end the impunity of perpetrators and provide appropriate compensation to victims, ensuring that they become agents of change and peace. The international community can count on the cooperation of my Government in that undertaking.