

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

Statement by H.E. Ms. Štiglic, Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations

Allow me first to thank the United States for organizing this important open debate. I should also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallström and the Council's other invitees for their briefings.

I would also like to align Slovenia with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union and the statement to be delivered by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Human Security Network.

In contemporary conflicts, sexual violence is not a side effect but, rather, a front line consideration. Civilians, mostly women and girls, are often the deliberate targets of such violence. Sexual violence in conflict situations is frequently invisible but rarely non-existent. The international community was shocked by the reported mass rapes in the Democratic Republic of Congo in July and August this year. However, alarming news on sexual violence is also coming from other conflict and post-conflict situations.

Sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations takes many forms, not just rape. Under international law, sexual violence constitutes different forms of crimes and acts. Although the victims of sexual violence are predominantly women and girls, we should not forget that sexual violence is also committed against boys and men. The current report (S/2010/604) of the Secretary-General gives a very good overview of the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in general, and specifically about the situations in countries on the Security Council's agenda. Slovenia welcomes the progress made in carrying out the five-point priority agenda of the Special Representative. We also welcome the recommendations in Secretary-General's report.

It is of the utmost importance to prevent the continuing sexual violence by fighting impunity. In that regard, the role of international criminal justice should be recognized, in particular that of the International Criminal Court. Slovenia supports the recommendation to increase pressure on the perpetrators of sexual violence, as well as those in the chain of command responsible for such acts, through the adoption of sanctions and other targeted measures against individuals and entities by the relevant sanctions committees.

As timely, objective, accurate and reliable information is fundamental in addressing conflict-related sexual violence, Slovenia supports the recommendation to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism that would build on the experience and practice of the mechanism established under resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), on children and armed conflict.

There is yet much to be done in the area of victim assistance. Disabled women face heightened vulnerability to sexual violence and exploitation. It is commendable that, in recognition of the risk faced by women maimed or wounded by antipersonnel landmines, sexual violence has been specifically included in the 2010 gender guidelines for mine action programmes that have been developed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

We look forward to the strategic framework on civilian protection and the series of scenario-based training modules, which will also address sexual violence, that are being finalized by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. We support the recent United Nations activities on this issue aimed at finalizing training materials for United Nations and national police, including the development of gender guidelines for military personnel in peacekeeping operations that also address the protection of women and girls from sexual violence.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Council that, a month ago, Slovenia adopted its 2010- 2015 national action plan for the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). One of the three main objectives of the plan is to prevent sexual violence against women and girls and to protect them during and after armed conflict. Furthermore, the action plan includes measures to strengthen the role of women in conflict resolution and conflict prevention, as well as in peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

In conclusion, I would like emphasize that sexual violence poses an obstacle to peace and security. It impedes women from participating in peace and democratic processes and in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. As a tool of war it can become a way of life: once entrenched in the fabric of society, it lingers long after the guns have fallen silent. Many women lose their health, livelihoods, husbands, families and support networks as a result of rape. This, in turn, can shatter the structures that anchor community values, and with that disrupt their transmission to future generations. Children accustomed to acts of rape can grow into adults who accept such acts as the norm. This vicious cycle must stop, as we cannot accept a selective zero-tolerance policy. Today's adoption of resolution 1960 (2010), on sexual violence, is an important step in that direction. It is for that reason that Slovenia joined in co-sponsoring it.