

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

Statement by H.E. Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom and President of the Security

Thank you very much Madam President and thank you for holding this open debate. Unfortunately, the issue of sexual violence is all too relevant to the work of the Security Council, as we have heard when discussing many different conflict situations this year.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the personal interest he has shown in this important dossier, and I thank him, Under Secretary-General Le Roy and General Gaye for their briefings.

I would also like to pay special tribute to Special Representative for the Secretary-General, Margot Wallstrom. In less than a year you have made a big impact. Your global advocacy role has given this issue prominence in public debate; pushing for an end to impunity, including in relation to the Walikale mass rapes. Your field visits to speak with survivors in DRC, Liberia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and briefings have brought the voices of those women to the Council to inform our deliberations.

Madam President,

If we are going to resolve and prevent conflict effectively, we must help to protect women from violence, and particularly sexual violence. This understanding is now fundamental to the way that the Security Council approaches its responsibilities.

In October, on the 10th anniversary of resolution 1325, many member states identified the need for concrete action to accompany the political support which the Council has given to this important agenda. We agree. We need to translate political commitments into tangible, lasting action on the ground. Without such practical action, we will be failing the victims of sexual violence.

The UK has clearly set out its commitments in its new Nation Action Plan. This was launched on International Elimination of Violence Against Women Day. These include:

- Strengthening the role of women in structures and processes within the UK Government designed to address conflict.
- Country-specific action plans that set out the action we will take on the ground to support women in priority countries, starting with Afghanistan, Nepal and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Working to strengthen implementation of commitments by the international community, continuing our strong advocacy role in multilateral and regional organisations.

The British Government also announced the appointment of a Minister with special responsibility for combating violence against women overseas.

Madam President,

Nowhere is the need for concrete commitments greater than in situations of armed conflict. As today's resolution highlights, sexual violence continues to be a widely used weapon of warfare. It stigmatises survivors, divides communities, exacerbates and prolongs conflict and impedes the restoration of peace and security. Impunity for such crimes can prevent a society recover from conflict and rebuilding.

It is clear that the proliferation of sexual violence against women and girls is often aimed at marginalising their contribution to society. It deliberately degrades the role they can play in restoring the fabric of peaceful communities. So in addition to the appalling human cost, there is a deeply damaging impact on societies as a whole.

Madam President,

I would like to take a moment to highlight the significant steps forward that we have taken today with resolution 1960.

- First, a new provision to identify parties to armed conflict that are credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence. This will help our efforts to tackle impunity for crimes of sexual violence in conflict.
- Second, increased monitoring, analysis and reporting. This will help us to develop a more comprehensive and integrated approach. More effective monitoring of patterns of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict should allow the Council to identify and mandate the action necessary to prevent it.
- Third, we will be able to address the arbitrary division that has been created by a monitoring and reporting mechanism for children in armed conflict who are subjected to patterns of sexual violence when no such protection is afforded to those who are older than 18.

Madam President,

I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and ambitious report. I am pleased that the Council has welcomed the report as a strong signal of our intention to support and assist in the eradication of sexual violence as a tactic of warfare. This terminology, and its consideration by the Council is relatively new, but the tragic reality is not.

We look forward to progress by the Secretary-General on his work with parties to armed conflict to ensure that such unacceptable abuses that threaten international peace and security come to an end.

I thank you.