

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

Statement by Mr. Le Hoai Trung, Permanent Mission of Viet Nam to the United Nations.

It gives me great honour and pleasure to speak on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and my own country, Viet Nam.

At the outset, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on the important issue of women, peace and security. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/149), which provides a useful basis for our deliberations. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for their comprehensive briefings.

Sexual violence in armed conflict is not a new phenomenon and has occurred in several corners of the world. Sexual violence in armed conflict has harmful and lasting economic, social, cultural and health consequences for victims, families and communities, even after the conflict stage has ended. We are deeply concerned about the dire plight of women and girls in situations of armed conflict. We condemn all violence against women in armed conflicts, including sexual violence. We recognize the urgent need to address their plight.

ASEAN member States wish to reiterate their strong commitment to working closely with the international community and the United Nations in ending sexual violence, wherever it occurs. Our States have been supportive of efforts to eliminate and prevent all acts of violence against women. ASEAN attaches great importance to the implementation of landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010). ASEAN supports the continued efforts of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the relevant United Nations bodies to advance the women, peace and security agenda in accordance with their respective mandates.

At the national and regional levels, ASEAN member States have been establishing legal and policy frameworks and implementing mechanisms to further enhance the status and welfare of women and girls and to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence. Those efforts have been strengthened by the adoption of various declarations, including the Declaration on the Advancement of Women in ASEAN, in 1988; the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region, in 2004; and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, in 2012.

Also, the Association established the ASEAN Committee on Women, in 2002, and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, in 2009. All those bodies aim to uphold, promote, protect and ensure respect for and the fulfilment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children in the ASEAN area. In that context, ASEAN member States would like to underline the following.

First, the fundamental causes of sexual violence in armed conflict should be tackled at their root. A preventive mechanism that addresses the root causes of armed conflict should be implemented. ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which aims to promote perpetual peace, everlasting amity and cooperation among its people, is a regional framework that we have put in place to that end. Such root causes should be addressed, inter alia, by promoting the rule of law,

good governance, democracy, poverty eradication, sustainable development and respect for and the protection of human rights, as well as by providing multisectoral assistance and services for the specific needs of women and girls.

Secondly, preventing and eradicating sexual violence against women are closely linked to women's empowerment and to gender equality. ASEAN views women as agents of change, who should participate, in a full and equal part, in peace, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict processes. In that regard, the continued efforts of the international community to address sexual violence in armed conflict must be supported.

Most recently, the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women adopted the agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. That document was widely hailed by Governments, United Nations officials and civil society as a huge step forward and a historic global agreement in the ongoing efforts to protect women and girls from violence.

Thirdly, ASEAN member countries are of the view that States must bear responsibility and do their utmost to prevent and address sexual violence in armed conflict. The United Nations and the international community can play a supporting role by providing assistance, by sharing best practices and by helping States to exercise that responsibility.

Let me conclude by stressing ASEAN's readiness and commitment to join efforts with the international community to ensure the elimination of sexual violence in armed conflict and to implement effective measures of accountability and redress in the field of women and peace and security.