

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

8234th meeting
Monday, 16 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of Estonia, Mr. Jürgenson:**

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting on this vital topic. We were impressed by the comprehensive statements by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Special Representative Pramila Patten and Ms. Razia Sultana.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union and reiterates its commitment to fighting gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

Sexual violence is among the gravest violations of human rights. Its impact ranges from immediate to multiple long-term physical and mental consequences for women and girls, men and boys. It also has very negative consequences for their families, communities, societies and countries as a whole. But it is not inevitable. There are ways to prevent it.

We fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation in his latest report (S/2018/250) to give due consideration to early-warning signs of sexual violence when monitoring conflict situations. If we fail to act early, the human, political and economic costs can be devastating, as we know all too well. That calls for a more alert, coordinated and comprehensive approach by States Members and the United Nations system. It is crucial to support survivors of sexual violence with adequate services so that they can rebuild their lives.

Survivors should also always be given the option of documenting their cases for future accountability processes. In that regard, the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in ensuring the effective investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based crimes cannot be emphasized enough. The work of UN-Women and Justice Rapid Response is also important, since its joint expert roster has been an effective tool for deploying experts to investigate and document sexual violence in conflict-driven zones.

Estonia is fully committed to tackling gender-based violence and has put in place a comprehensive development strategy for the period from 2015 to 2020 for reducing violence domestically. It lays out concrete activities for reducing and preventing violence in its various forms, including sexual violence. Globally, Estonia has been a strong supporter of Special Representative Pramila Patten and her mandate. We are also proud to be a consistent contributor to the ICC Trust Fund for Victims, which alleviates suffering for survivors of violence. I would also like to emphasize the important role of civil society.

While intergovernmental cooperation is extremely significant, we need to ensure that everyone is heard. Civil-society and non-governmental organizations, and women's organizations in particular, can provide new insight and data that could otherwise be missed. It is therefore very important to ensure that non-governmental organizations have larger platforms and more access to United Nations meetings and forums. That would unquestionably help us to ensure that every detail is accounted for in achieving our goals related to ending conflict-related sexual violence. Our experience has shown that national action plans for implementing resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, are essential in raising awareness of the need for the inclusion of women in conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding.

Estonia is currently implementing its second national action plan, which was created and is being implemented jointly with non-governmental organizations. A fundamental lesson that we have learned from experience and from the Secretary-General's reports is the sheer level of detail that we have to deal with in addressing sexual violence in conflict-driven zones. Let us work together, domestically and globally, to put an end to sexual violence forever.