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## Conflict-related sexual violence is a terror tactic [fr]

### Women and Peace and Security: "Conflict-related sexual violence" - Statement by Mr. François Delattre, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations - Security Council - 15 April 2015

I thank the Jordanian presidency for convening today's important debate on sexual violence in conflict, which represents a long-standing and urgent priority for France. I also thank Ms. Bangura and Ms. Allamin for their briefings and for their exemplary activities.

Exactly one year and one day ago, on 14 April 2014, 276 highschool girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram in Chibok, Nigeria. We still have had no word on those young girls, who, like other women and girls abducted by that terrorist group, have been subjected to sexual violence and forced marriage and reduced to slavery, assuming that they have not been sold outright. The plight of those young Nigerians is unfortunately shared by thousands of other young girls, women and children.

The widespread sexual violence being perpetrated by extremist non-State groups is a daily assault on our most basic values. In the Middle East and in Africa, it has become the signature of extremist and terrorist armed groups that seek to dehumanize targeted, terrified communities. Daesh, for instance, has aimed its sexual violence against women and girls on the basis of their ethnicity, their sexual orientation or their influence within their communities. In August 2014, during the attacks in Sinjar in northern Iraq, hundreds of Yazidi women were abducted and sold in Syria as sexual slaves. I welcome the opportunity to applaud Iraqi parliamentarian Vian Dakhil for her unforgettable and moving testimony (see S.PV 7419) before this body at last month's open debate on persecuted minorities in the Middle East, which was convened by the French presidency. Some 2,500 women and children from the Yazidi, Christian, Kurd and Shabak minorities are currently being held by Daesh in northern Iraq, and that figure does not include all the women and girls who have not been identified owing to the lack of statistics that accurately reflect the reality on the ground. Still, in order to condemn such savagery and act to stop it, we must have reliable and exact data on the fate of those women and children.

Given their scale and character, the acts of sexual violence committed by extremist groups demand a specific response. First of all, the Security Council should support the recommendation of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative calling for sexual violence to be categorized as a terror tactic and not merely a tactic of war, pursuant to resolution 1820 (2008).

Secondly, we must ensure effective follow-up to the addition to the Secretary-General's blacklist of 13 conflict parties accused of sexual violence, including Daesh and Boko Haram. States must do their utmost to end such acts of violence and bring the perpetrators, who until now have enjoyed virtually complete impunity, to justice. France therefore calls on all concerned States to ensure that justice at both the international and the national levels is able to proceed and to cooperate with United Nations investigation mechanisms seeking to force the perpetrators to answer for their acts.

Furthermore, once sexual violence has been categorized as a terror tactic, that new reality should be reflected in the sanctions regime against Al Qaeda. Finally, in general terms, we should pay particular attention, within the framework of the Coalition against terrorism and the fight against terrorism, to the risks of imminent sexual violence wherever communities, minorities and children are concerned.

Acts of sexual violence committed by violent extremist groups, however barbaric, should not let us forget those committed by other actors. I would like first to address the responsibility of State actors. True, there has been notable progress in certain countries. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, has improved access to reparations for the victims of sexual violence and has allowed the prosecution of members of the national security forces. With French technical and financial assistance, the Central African authorities are in the process of setting up a rapid response unit and a special criminal tribunal to investigate human-rights violations, including sexual violence.

But such efforts are not enough. Sexual violence continues to be committed by State security forces in the Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria. Syrian women are the targets of such violence in detention centres or at the hands of the Syrian intelligence services. The responsibility of States is also essential for countries involved in peace processes. The integration of the issue of sexual violence into the Mali and the Central African Republic peace accords was a first step. In order not to undermine the credibility of those processes, we must now ensure that such provisions are effectively implemented and that individuals implicated in acts of sexual violence are not inadvertently freed.

I would now like to mention those actors implicated in such crimes in refugee centres or camps for displaced persons, where women are particularly exposed. The fear of rape is currently one of the main reasons for the flight of Syrian refugee women to neighbouring countries. It is therefore all the more critical to ensure that women have access to security and basic medical assistance in those centres. France has delivered psychological and medical support through non-governmental organizations to the victims of sexual violence in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan and to internally displaced women in Syria, as well as to Syrian refugee women in Lebanon. We call on other States to join us in providing access to medical services to the victims of sexual violence.

Finally, I would like to recall the matter of sexual violence perpetrated by United Nations staff or by Blue Helmets. At the end of March, the Secretary-General published a report entitled "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" (A/69/779), which confirms that a number of peacekeeping operations employ individuals suspected of having committed acts of sexual violence or sexual abuse, even against minors. I have already said, and I repeat, that we must be especially vigilant and apply zero tolerance on this matter if we wish the United Nations to retain its credibility and serve as a model. In that context, I welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to make predeployment gender-sensitivity training for peacekeepers a requirement across the board.

In light of the variety of actors responsible for sexual violence, both within and outside the United Nations, the solutions are well known. To mention only a few, we need to strengthen security in and around camps for refugees and internally displaced persons; increase the participation of women in peacekeeping operations, peace negotiations and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism; and guarantee financing via the United Nations general budget for women protection advisors.

The high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000) this coming October will be an opportunity for the United Nations and States to deliver on their commitments on those different points. The review should be an opportunity for everyone to ensure the greatest possible mobilization of our will, our action and our resources. The fight against sexual violence in conflict must be waged every day by the United Nations and by each and every one of us. The Council may rest assured of the firm commitment of France to the fight.