

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Ms. Frankinet, Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations.*

I thank Minister Hague for his focus on inscribing the prevention of sexual violence on the international agenda. The statement recently adopted by the Group of Eight (G-8), the Minister's visit to the Great Lakes region and the decision to hold a debate of the Security Council on the issue are all extremely useful initiatives in the context of the international campaign against sexual violence in conflict.

I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/149) and for his briefing this morning. The recommendations in his report are included in resolution 2106 (2013), which the Council has adopted today. Belgium welcomes the comprehensive operational framework outlined in the resolution to fight sexual violence in conflict, and is proud to co-sponsor the text.

My thanks also go to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for her unwavering commitment. In clearly emphasizing the importance of national leadership, she has successfully negotiated specific commitments with the Governments of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Somalia.

As the Special Representative is aware, my country has always been a strong advocate of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security; she also knows how wholeheartedly Belgium supports her mandate and her action plan. I note that my country is currently finalizing its second national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), covering the period 2013-2016.

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union. I shall therefore limit my remarks to four points of particular importance for Belgium.

First, conflict-related sexual violence can amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. Such violations of international law are imprescriptible and perpetrators incur heavy penalties. During Minister Hague's visit to the Great Lakes region, he saw for himself how the lives of women and children continue to be destroyed every day by such crimes. We remain convinced that national courts must remain the locus of prosecution of perpetrators of serious international crimes, such as sexual violence. In that context, it is important to strengthen the judicial systems of those countries in order to allow trials to take place in the best possible conditions. The Special Representative has announced the important signing by the Congolese authorities of an agreement in principle to fight against sexual violence. In the light of recent human rights violations in the region, we nevertheless believe that the implementation of the agreement must be constantly monitored.

Secondly, the International Criminal Court is complementary to national criminal courts. The broad definition of sexual violence in the Rome Statute should be applied in this context. We invite those countries that have not yet done so to ratify the Statute without further delay.

Thirdly, I would also like to thank the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for its determined and courageous actions. We also attach great importance to the activities of the intergovernmental organization Justice Rapid Response, which specializes in the deployment of the panels of experts where sexual violence has been committed. Belgium supports all efforts to build the capacities of national actors and all initiatives to aid the victims.

Fourthly, Belgium would also like to recall that any sexual violence is a serious violation of human

rights. In that context, everything must be done to ensure that victims have access to all necessary services from multiple sectors.