

Chair's Summary - Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict

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The Summit

From 10 to 13 June 2014, in London, government representatives from over 120 countries, over 1,000 experts, faith leaders, youth organisations and representatives of civil society and international organisations came together at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Together, we committed to break the taboo around wartime rape and take action to put an end to its use, and to shatter the culture of impunity. At the Summit, we united in our determination to tackle sexual violence in conflict, just as previous generations joined forces to put an end to slavery and landmines. This is a matter of our common humanity. We pledged our support for engendering a global shift in attitudes towards sexual violence, causing a lasting and profound shift, transforming world opinion. Sexual violence is not a lesser crime: it is an atrocity of the first order and there must be no safe haven for perpetrators anywhere. We were unified in calling for concrete, practical and forward looking outcomes, and sending a message that the era of impunity for wartime sexual violence was over, sending fear into the hearts of would-be perpetrators. Governments are crucial to ending sexual violence, but the Summit drew inspiration and ideas from survivors, activists and artists. We will work with regional and international organisations to ensure that no corner of the globe is left untouched by our campaign.

We launched the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, setting out international standards on how to collect the strongest possible information and evidence, whilst protecting witnesses, in order to increase convictions and deter future perpetrators.

This Chair's Summary captures the way in which we will turn political commitment into practical action to overcome the barriers to ending sexual violence in conflict. This change will require persistence, innovation, commitment and continued leadership on the part of governments, experts, civil society, the media, legal professionals and security forces.

The Issue

Sexual violence in conflict is a uniquely destructive act and method of war. It is an outrage to all morality. Survivors who have gone through the trauma of an attack too often also face rejection by their families and reprisals from their communities. Moreover, sexual violence in conflict often flows from underlying inequalities. Further, a society that believes in human rights for all human beings and opportunities for all its citizens cannot know about the way rape is used as a weapon of war and then simply ignore it.

But it is not only our values that are at stake. Sexual violence in conflict poses a grave threat to international peace and security. It exacerbates tension and violence and undermines stability. It is prohibited under international law: under specific provisions of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, and under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. It is a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions, and, when used as a method of warfare, it will always be unlawful. States have responsibility for breaches of international law committed by their armed forces. Although it is and has been a feature of most conflicts, it has only recently been discussed openly in international conflict-prevention discourse. Yet it can undermine ceasefires, and prevent lasting reconciliation long after the last bullets have been fired. It affects not only women and girls, but also men and boys.

Thus sexual violence has a devastating impact on societies already traumatised by war, and overwhelming social, psychological and economic consequences for those it affects. All too often the stigma and shame associated with sexual violence remains with the victim rather than the perpetrator. By undermining reconciliation, deepening grievances and devastating communities, sexual violence feeds a cycle of conflict.

What we will do

We were united in our view that sexual violence is not an inevitable side-effect of war. It can be stopped if perpetrators are held to account and attitudes and practices change. Building on the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict launched at UNGA in 2013, at the Summit we signed a Statement of Action, and also agreed a range of legal, humanitarian and security sector reforms that will play a critical role in ending the culture of impunity for sexual violence in conflict. Our discussions were informed by contributions from some of the world's leading experts and authorities in the field, as well as the youth discussions. We considered the lessons learned from a number of conflict-affected countries, and discussed the role of military, peacekeeping and humanitarian agencies in acting to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. We agreed to fund UN and NGO efforts that provide support and assistance to survivors, including helping them seek justice.

The debate during the Summit addressed four key areas for change:

1. Improve accountability at the national and international level, including through better documentation, investigations and prosecutions at the national and international level, and better legislation implementing international obligations and standards;
2. Provide greater support and protection to survivors of sexual violence, including children;
3. Ensure sexual and gender-based violence responses and the promotion of gender equality are fully integrated in all peace and security efforts, including security and justice sector reform and military and police training; and
4. Improve international strategic co-operation.

Not Just Governments

We highlighted the important role that women have to play in maintaining international peace and security, although this has historically been perceived to be the sole preserve of political and military elites. It noted that women's groups have played an important role in calling for an end to violence and in localised mediation and reconciliation efforts. It recognised that women often have more access and legitimacy than official negotiators, yet remain largely excluded from formal processes. Participation of women in peace processes must become the norm. We shared stories of hope where this had had a transformative effect. Ministers agreed that more could be done to implement the commitments set out in UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 through to 2122 – more States needed to set out rigorous and evaluative National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security. There needed to be more women in senior positions within the UN and other international organisations; more female ambassadors to the UN; and more women in the police and military. Regional and international institutions should spearhead our efforts.

We acknowledged the vital role that civil society actors have to play in engaging their communities in both the prevention of, and response to, sexual violence in conflict. It recognised that local community activists are often best placed to make a difference on the ground, including in changing attitudes and behaviours that underpin inequality and the spread of violence.

We noted that good laws and international agreements in themselves are not enough if attitudes don't change. In this respect, faith groups have a key role to play, including in their role providing care, treatment and support for survivors. Through their networks, they often have access and influence with local communities that no other actor has. As such, they are uniquely placed to change hearts and minds, and challenge cultural and social norms, including notions of masculine identity as it affects sexual violence. The Summit recognised the need to engage faith-based organisations as active partners in the fight against sexual violence, both in helping to formulate strategy and in providing front-line support to survivors.

Together, we agreed the following:

Accountability

We agreed that addressing impunity requires strengthening accountability and justice in both conflict and post-conflict contexts. We recognised that meeting this challenge called for an improvement in the capacity and capability of justice sector actors - judiciary, police, magistrates, prosecutors and advocates/lawyers. It also requires improved systems, strengthened institutions, including laws and policy, and greater synergy between national and international approaches. Better implementation of existing legal obligations by States is required. Judges at the national and international level should be given training so that they can adjudicate effectively sexual violence crimes. In addition to the technical and institutional work, there was also recognition of the critical need to put victims' and survivors' rights, their security and safety, at the forefront and centre of justice. Lack of recognition of men and boys when they are victims can result in failures in documentation and evidence collection, leading to a lack of justice.

Accountability requires a legal framework through which to deliver justice for those who commit and command crimes. States were urged to strengthen their domestic laws so that those responsible for sexual violence can reliably be prosecuted in the countries where their crimes were committed. National law in conflict and post-conflict countries often lags behind international norms. States parties to the ICC Statute should all criminalise the crimes prohibited under the Statute so they can be prosecuted at the national level. For those States not parties to the ICC Statute, they can still introduce laws which support the aims and objectives of the ICC. There is also an obligation for all states under the Geneva Conventions to criminalise grave breaches and allow for national prosecution of grave breaches on the basis of universal jurisdiction. Where such legislation has not been enacted, it should be. Definitions of sexual violence in domestic legislation should confirm to standards and definitions in international law, and should also ensure that crimes against men and boys can be prosecuted. Specialised units for the investigation of such offences can help with their prosecution. Often lack of capacity is an issue; but political will is also required. A model law for crimes prohibited under international law could help states implement their international obligations.

A significant gap at the international level was identified: the grave breaches regime, which requires all states to exercise universal jurisdiction in relation to the most serious breaches of international humanitarian law, has only traditionally been considered to apply in international armed conflict; but most modern conflicts are non-international armed conflicts.

International prosecutions are required where States are unwilling or unable to carry out genuine investigations and prosecutions. The ICC's sexual violence casework is increasing and its efforts should be supported, but it should continue to operate on the principle of complementarity, where states cannot prosecute Rome Statute crimes domestically. ICC jurisprudence should inform the development of national

law, although there remain challenges in ensuring that the same standards are applied to sexual violence crimes as for other crimes.

The International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, produced in collaboration with over 200 gender and sexual violence experts, was launched at the Summit. The Protocol will help strengthen the evidence base for bringing perpetrators to justice, thus overcoming one of the key barriers to tackling impunity for sexual violence in conflict. It guides practitioners on how to obtain evidence for the key elements of sexual violence crimes. A stronger evidence base will also lessen the burden on survivor testimony as the basis of prosecutions, as well as ensuring that victims are not further stigmatised or traumatised by the trial process. Victims' well-being must be at the centre of all data collection, emphasising informed consent and confidentiality. Data-collection should not be gender-blind to men and boys. We agreed that in implementing the Protocol, States should ensure joint training between the medical, legal, justice and law-enforcement sectors. Where sexual violence occurs in remote areas, States should increase the number of practitioners with the right skills. Funding for front-line responders should be long-term, and not just focussed on emergency phases.

Many countries voiced their public support for the Protocol. These partners committed to support efforts to end impunity for sexual violence in conflict by using the Protocol to improve standards of documentation and investigation of these crimes, so that perpetrators can be held to account and survivors receive the justice they deserve. By supporting the Protocol, partners indicated their support for the basic principles and methods set out in the Protocol and agreed to facilitate and empower documentation of sexual and gender-based violence crimes in accordance with these principles. They also agreed to encourage civil society to use the methodology in the Protocol when training staff documenting sexual violence in conflict areas. Partners indicated their willingness to fund overseas initiatives related to accountability for international crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, and to encourage strongly these initiatives to incorporate the basic principles and methods into their projects.

The launch of the Protocol is just the first step. The next step is to implement the Protocol in a way that keeps it relevant, promotes its advocacy, ensures its accessibility and dissemination, adapts it to national contexts and monitors its progress.

Ministers agreed that international collective action is essential in providing support to countries affected by sexual violence in conflict, including through capacity-building supported by the deployment of appropriate expertise. Pooling the expertise available, for example by establishing rosters at the regional level, ensuring that experts could be more rapidly deployed, and that predictable funding is available to do so, would all help to improve collective action. The need was especially great in remote areas where formal justice mechanisms are difficult to access.

We agreed that States should ensure that in ceasefires and peace negotiations, and the UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions that support them, no amnesties should be given to those who commit sexual violence in conflict.

We agreed that governments should also reduce the risk of conflict including by signing and ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty. We recognised that displacement and relocation, both internally and across borders, is about finding safety and that it is vital that the rights of individuals who have been forced to move are recognised in line with the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Support for Survivors

We agreed that, while accountability for perpetrators is crucial, survivors and victims of sexual violence need a wide range of support. Survivors must be at the centre of the response to sexual violence in conflict, to ensure re-empowerment and avoid further victimisation.

We also acknowledged the many victims who are less visible, less recognised and less able to receive assistance. This includes children who are born of conflict-related rape who suffer the lifelong consequences of the act, girl child soldiers who are ‘married’ to combatants and forced into sexual slavery, and men and boys in detention who are systematically raped as a form of punishment or torture.

Ministers recognised that a huge proportion of victims of sexual violence in conflict were children, but that more could be done to support children specifically affected. Children born of rape should be recognised in terms of citizenship, education, health needs and community integration. A focus on children should be at the centre of all practical and political action on sexual violence in conflict, not treated as an add-on. Child protection, health and education should be considered as essential to all humanitarian responses. All governments must ensure the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child through national action plans.

Ministers recognised the need to respond rapidly to the needs of all victims. The Summit also recognised the different factors that foster and underpin this violence as well as the specific physical and psychological needs survivors have in order to overcome their experiences - and to rebuild their lives. We noted the need for a flexible and responsive approach to sexual violence: stigma is not the same for everyone, and overcoming it will require different policy responses. We agreed that laws that address sexual violence must ensure that definitions of survivors be gender-neutral.

We agreed that governments should ensure that survivors receive holistic and integrated services that include full sexual reproductive health rights, psycho-social support, livelihoods support and shelter. Survivors currently received care that is fragmented and inaccessible, and in some cases feared retribution. Lessons learned from HIV and AIDS included shifting the language from victim to survivor, addressing stigma with community actors, and ensuring effective monitoring and accountability measures.

We agreed that the tools for responding to sexual violence needed to be improved, such as ensuring coordinating the delivery of services. Improved partnership between donors, states and local organisations was vital, particularly as grassroots organisations and women’s groups are frequently the first responders in a crisis. Such organisations should be consulted by international donors in crisis response, for the wealth of local knowledge they possess. Funds should be made accessible for local organisations of men and women to ensure that they have the requisite capacity and training specifically in how to respond to sexual violence. Funding could potentially be leveraged from other donor areas (e.g. Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria). We also considered that sustainable funding was necessary to build long-term sustainable engagement with communities.

We saluted the work of human rights defenders, who hold a key role in supporting survivors and shining a spotlight of these crimes. They need to be recognised and protected. Ministers should speak out in support of human rights defenders and include them in official delegations. Attacks on human rights defenders should never be tolerated – they can be equivalent to attacks on the primary victims themselves. Human rights defenders’ participation in peace processes should be promoted and monitored as part of UNSC Resolution 1325.

We identified reparations as the most survivor-centric and valuable way of supporting survivors of sexual violence in conflict, often cited by victims and survivors of sexual violence as key to their recovery. But they are often underused as a means of justice. We agreed that they were not solely about financial compensation, but the restoration of dignity, status and health. They could take the form of an apology, or access to employment. Reparations should be accessible and prompt; should not necessarily depend on evidence and documentation; should treat sexual violence survivors in the same way as other survivors; be confidential; and, above all, be transformative. Reparations should aspire to heal the wounds of post-conflict society and to address long-standing gender issues, through, for example reconciliation commissions in which sexual violence could be discussed. Survivors should participate in determining the form they take. UN Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights launched the Guidance Note of the UN Secretary General on Reparations for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, a

blueprint for promoting gender-sensitive approaches to the design and delivery of reparations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence.

We recalled the launch of the UK-initiated ‘Call to Action’ to end violence against women and girls in emergencies. We all agreed that preventing and responding to sexual violence must be prioritized from the start of any humanitarian response and most importantly, recognised as life-saving activity, not an afterthought. We noted that the Call to Action helps to fulfil the aim set out in the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict by mobilising the humanitarian community to address the many forms of gender-based violence in all types of emergency, including sexual violence in conflict situations. We agreed on the need to implement urgently the commitments contained in the Call to Action, to ensure that those making them are held accountable for them, and to broaden international agreement on how best to protect women and girls in emergencies.

Ministers reviewed progress so far in improving the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence in emergencies, particularly in recent and current humanitarian crises. Ministers also discussed the remaining challenges, and how they can be overcome, to ensure every humanitarian response includes the steps necessary to mitigate the risk of gender-based violence and to provide safe and comprehensive services for survivors.

Security and Justice Sector Reform

Ministers agreed that sexual violence in conflict, when used as a method of war, or as a form of terror or intimidation, is a security issue that demands a security response. The UN Security Council has articulated the link between sexual violence and the maintenance and restoration of international peace and security in a series of resolutions since 2008. The challenge now is to convert these resolutions into practical action. Ministers of Defence should take responsibility for preventing sexual violence by their armed forces.

The military is a critical partner for both prevention and protection, but is not always properly equipped to deal with this sensitive and difficult problem. The Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict made the commitment to ensure national military and police doctrine and training was aligned with international law. Security forces are often the first responders to sexual violence. They have access to information about events on the ground that is otherwise unavailable to civilians. They may be the only protection that vulnerable sections of society have against sexual violence. In a limited number of cases they may also be the perpetrators.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and the subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, provide a framework for how militaries can address sexual violence in their doctrine and accompanying policies. Knowledge of these doctrines, policies and guidelines down the command chain is critical. Training, including pre-deployment training, for all levels is important and should be comprehensive. It needs to be relevant and practical, scenario-based and operationally-focused. Women’s participation in the security sector at all levels has been recognized as a critical component of mission success.

We noted that action on sexual violence is a central part of discharging a Peacekeeping Protection of Civilians mandate (which covers 95% of current Peacekeepers). Preventing sexual violence should always be a defined mission objective as part of Protection of Civilian responsibilities. We highlighted the vital role of senior military, police and civilian leadership of peacekeeping missions in addressing sexual violence. The issue should be mainstreamed across all staff. Training at the national level on sexual violence should be consistent and the UN could have a role in driving up standards by an evaluation or monitoring process. Civil society considered that there should be more direct oversight, vetting, and benchmarking by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and improved accountability for delivery, ultimately to the UNSC.

Much has been done over recent years to address cases of sexual violence committed by peacekeepers, but continued cases threaten the credibility of the international peacekeeping system and individual missions, and discourage victims from coming forward. Whilst progress has been made to tackle sexual violence by the UN, more needs to be done to track progress and gather information, including on crimes against men and boys. There should be a review of progress on the issues identified by the Zeid Report. UN processes for investigating sexual violence should be more transparent, and there should be no inconsistency in how civilian and military staff are treated. States must do more to investigate and prosecute their own nationals who have been accused of sexual violence whilst on peacekeeping operations. The outcome of cases should be reported back to victims and missions.

We agreed that security and justice sectors provide an enabling environment to allow active and meaningful participation of women, including through comprehensive and on-going mentoring and training for security and justice sector practitioners at all levels. Community engagement in setting standards is critical.

Staffing was important: female protection advisers and gender advisers should be in influential positions in mission structures, and missions should have a fixed percentage of female police and peacekeepers. Senior military and civilian leadership should be personally accountable for proactive delivery on tackling sexual violence.

There should be more consistent and accessible mission-specific capacity development including training ahead of and during deployment, both by troop contributing countries and the UN, to always include: substantive training for Force Commanders and SRSGs; a pre-deployment recce in-country; and scenario training. All missions and troop contributing countries should be required to report publicly on what training their troops have received, based on their respective responsibilities, to be monitored by DPKO.

We emphasised that security and justice sectors should be an enabling environment for the active and meaningful participation of women in post-conflict situations. This could be achieved through comprehensive and on-going mentoring and training for security and justice sector practitioners at all levels. Female protection advisers and gender advisers should be in influential positions in mission structures, and missions should have a higher percentage of female police and peacekeepers.

International Cooperation

The Summit recognised the need for continued close international cooperation to dismantle the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. It welcomed the strong contribution of the UN Action member entities, as well as the active stance being taken by the European Union and African Union. It also strongly welcomed the ongoing work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the work of non-governmental and international organisations.

DRC and Somalia

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia have suffered long conflicts but are showing determination in the struggle against sexual violence in conflict and have vital lessons to share. We will support them in their crucial work.

The Federal Government of Somalia presented its National Action Plan on ending sexual violence in conflict, building on the work of the joint UN-UK Team of Experts (ToE) in December 2013. The ground-breaking plan brought together government Ministers, four star Generals, Police Commissioners, lawyers, judges and members of civil society organisations in a series of workshops to turn the recommendations of the ToE into a Somali owned plan. The plans are broken down by each Ministry, with strong civil society engagement, and rooted in expert advice and evidence. The plan was formally agreed at a validation workshop on 27 May in Mogadishu. The Action Plan received wide international recognition and support

from all UN agencies, the World Bank, and African and donor countries. The international community agreed to help Somalia keep up the momentum to move quickly from planning to implementation.

Ministers voiced their support for the DRC, which in the midst of continued instability involving 40 armed groups, has launched a National Strategy to Fight Sexual Violence. This includes support to the justice sector, reform of institutions in the security sector, improved military justice, work on prevention and training and responding to victims. Challenges remain, including the ongoing conflict, protection of witnesses and logistical and financial issues affecting access to services. One child survivor challenged DRC to implement quickly their Summit pledges and the UNGA Declaration. Ministers present committed to do so with the international community's continued support. SRSG Zainab Hawa Bangura called for a strategic alliance between government and civil society, and a survivor-centred solution. It is vital therefore to continue strategic alliances to work in partnership and assist the DRC in a tailored approach. The UN system stood in solidarity with the international community and the DRC in this regard.

Beyond the Summit

The international community has never done enough to stop these crimes, but having come together here in London, we can change that. For all the things we struggle to agree as nations, the abhorrence of sexual violence in conflict cannot be one of them. This Summit is just the beginning. We must apply the lessons we have learned and move from condemnation to concrete action. We must all live up to the commitments we have made. Having come together we must move forward with a collective responsibility, showing leadership at all levels on ending sexual violence in conflict.

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