

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Berger, Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations.

I thank Great Britain for organizing this debate and Secretary Hague in particular for his personal commitment. I also congratulate the United States on having so ably negotiated resolution 2106 (2013) adopted today.

We also thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative Zainab Bangura and commend them for their leadership, as well as today's briefers.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

We welcome the focus of today's debate on addressing accountability and the fight against impunity. Let me be clear — our ultimate goal has to be, first and foremost, the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. In cases where acts of sexual violence have already occurred, it is indispensable that perpetrators be immediately brought to justice and survivors receive adequate support and redress. Only effective criminal prosecution during and after conflict will lead to an equally effective prevention system that can help to create long-term peace.

Let me stress some important points and provide some practical examples. First, it cannot be stressed enough that part of any effective prevention of sexual violence is the equal involvement of women. Not only the consideration of their special needs, but also their participation in all stages of decision-making processes are essential. This also applies to programmes such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform and transitional justice. In this regard, Germany has supported, inter alia, a regional project in the Horn of Africa to empower women by helping them to gain access to political and economical decision-making processes.

Secondly, when sexual violence constitutes a crime against humanity, a war crime or even genocide, it has to be subject to punishment and has to be excluded from amnesty provisions. Whenever States are not willing or capable to fulfil their responsibility to prosecute perpetrators accordingly, the international community must react in order to prevent a culture of impunity, as was recently stressed at the Group of Eight meeting in the United Kingdom. Regional justice mechanisms and the International Criminal Court (ICC) can also play an important role. We also welcome the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura's Office in this regard.

The German Centre for International Peace Operations offers special pre-deployment courses on establishing the rule of law, which emphasize the need to prosecute sexual violence and raise awareness for gender-based violence.

Thirdly, appropriate medical and psychosocial support for survivors of sexual violence, including access to sexual reproductive health services, as well as access to justice and reparations, are fundamental prerequisites for the effective reintegration of women into their respective societies. Germany has, for example, funded several medical counseling centres in Congo, where women can receive medical and psychological support, as well as emergency HIV post-exposure prophylaxis. We also support transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth and reconciliation committees, and dialogue between these and women's rights organizations.

Lastly, our full support is needed by those who are essential to the fight against the scourge of sexual violence, such as human rights defenders, doctors and journalists, who are themselves at special risk.

Let me end by stressing that the Security Council has a role to play in monitoring the commitments made by parties to conflicts. In this regard, it can and should do more to hold perpetrators accountable. Without having to create a new mechanism, it could already make use of the tools at hand, for example by reacting to cases of sexual violence in a certain country with Security Council press statements, by writing specific letters to concerned Governments or by referring specific cases more frequently to the Sanctions Committees and, as a last resort, to the ICC.