

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

Statement by Mr. Nkoloi, Permanent Mission of Botswana to the United Nations.

We congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June, as well as for convening this thematic debate. We also thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and the other speakers for their briefings this morning.

We begin by reaffirming the importance that Botswana attaches to the protection and promotion of the rights of women and children, as well as our commitment to address all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence.

Sexual violence in armed conflict represents one of the most heinous violations or abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict is therefore a matter both of upholding universal human rights and of maintaining international security, in keeping with relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, Botswana welcomes the continued focus by the Council on this thematic debate and wishes to reiterate the importance of increased and more systemic attention to the women and peace and security agenda in the Council's own work.

We remain deeply concerned that, despite repeated condemnations by the international community of sexual violence in conflict situations, such acts continue to occur, and in some situations have even become systematic and widespread, with women and children constituting the majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict. We call on all perpetrators of such heinous acts to find it in their hearts to stop such crimes. Sexual violence in the name of armed conflict contravenes human rights. It goes against human nature and against humankind.

In that regard, I wish to state categorically that impunity for sexual violence, including by armed groups, is unacceptable and can never be tolerated. To that end, my delegation wishes to underscore the importance of ending impunity for such acts as part of a comprehensive approach to seeking sustainable peace, justice and security. Regrettably, a lack of accountability tends to reinforce the social normalization of, and tolerance for, sexual violence. We therefore recognize the need for enhanced political will and commitment to prevent these crimes by promoting and protecting the rights of women and children.

While we remain convinced that more needs be done to address such ongoing atrocities, my delegation also wishes to emphasise the responsibility of States to comply with their relevant obligations to end impunity, and to effectively use all available means to enforce accountability by prosecuting all perpetrators of such crimes. Botswana recognises the important role of the United Nations system in addressing violence against women and children at the global, regional and national levels, and in assisting States in their efforts to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and children.

To that end, I wish to express the support of my delegation for the work of UN-Women, as well as the mandates of the Secretary-General's Special Representatives on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Children and Armed Conflict. While also recognizing the existing normative framework established under various Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1261 (1999), 1325 (2000) and other subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security and on children and armed conflict, Botswana shares the belief that efforts to address sexual violence in conflict should be consistent with, and complementary to, wider United Nations efforts. In that regard, we also wish to

underline that greater coordination and collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders is essential to strengthening global efforts to address sexual violence.

Botswana believes that efforts to end sexual violence must also promote women's active and equal participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, transitional justice and security sector reform processes. In that regard, we strongly support the involvement of women in peace negotiations, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

With regard to women's access to justice, we call on States to take practical steps to address obstacles in women's access to justice, including by creating an enabling environment where women can easily report incidents of violence without fear or intimidation. Furthermore, we urge all States to strengthen the capacity of national criminal justice systems to serve victims with dignity.

With regard to the engagement of all segments of society to combat sexual violence, our belief is that men and boys must be socialized and engaged as partners to create a culture of peace, tolerance and respect for women. That includes ending the stigmatization of victims and instilling a change of attitude and behaviour in men and boys.

Botswana therefore pledges to work with the international community as it seeks to find ways to stop violence against women and children in the context of conflict. We welcome the Council's unanimous adoption this morning of a new resolution on women and peace and security (resolution 2106 (2013)). We remain optimistic that, given our collective will, especially in the Security Council, we will end such shameful crimes against humanity.