

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

Statement by Mr. Osorio, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate the United Kingdom on its presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their briefings, as well as others who spoken today.

Colombia endorses the repeated rejections by the Security Council of all acts of sexual violence and other forms violence against civilians in armed conflict, in particular against women and children. My country deplores the fact that these situations continue to arise in armed conflict in various parts of the world, and believes that the international community should adopt an attitude of strict condemnation and seek, through all means, to abolish violence, ensure the protection of and reparations for victims, and see to it that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Colombia is aware of the impact of sexual violence in conflicts on international peace and security, and believes that we must not lose sight of the fact that the primary responsibility to put an end to that scourge and to protect the victims lies with States. We believe it necessary for international cooperation in this field to be developed and implemented, not just in a constructive way, but also on the basis of an open dialogue with the Governments concerned, so as to ensure that effective solutions are found and that national institutions and processes are strengthened, while respecting States' policies and priorities.

Colombia also joins in the repeated condemnations by the Security Council of violations of international humanitarian law committed against women and girls, and the need to bring to justice those who are responsible for such crimes, in particular the perpetrators of sexual violence against women. We also underscore the importance of enhancing the role of women in peacebuilding and in providing assistance to victims, in particular the victims of sexual violence. It is clear that in order to ensure that those cases are managed properly, information has to be gathered by United Nations agencies on the ground in a timely, precise, reliable and objective way. In that way, the United Nations entities can address each case individually, conduct related criminal investigations, and ensure due process and follow-up, as required.

The resolutions that have been referred to in the framework of this debate call up the Secretary-General to conduct dialogues, "as appropriate", with the parties to armed conflict. Currently, the Government of Colombia is holding a peace dialogue with the spokespersons of an illegal armed group. From the outset, we have believed that the ownership and autonomy of the Government are essential in this process, as an any outside intervention lacking the consent of the Colombian Government would negatively interfere in that process. When we believe support or mediation to be appropriate, we will make that known. Therefore, we are grateful for offers of good offices, and we welcome those voices that support the peace process and the international pressure to put an end to those violent acts and in particular those against women.

Along those lines, it is worth mentioning some of the good practices introduced by Colombia to prevent, investigate and sanction sexual violence in armed conflict. For example, our National Council for Economic and Social Policy has used about \$1 million to coordinate all the institutional forces within our country to implement the national public policy for gender equality and the comprehensive plan to ensure a life free of violence for women by implementing the law on reparations for victims.

Strengthening the role and ability of women and promoting the enjoyment and observance of their rights is particularly important to the Government of Colombia. In that regard, the contribution of the United Nations system and the international community is key within a framework of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States. As can be seen and has been underscored by the Secretary-General in his reports, Colombia has different measures and safeguards that mark a decisive step forward in its efforts to comprehensively and consistently address that problem.