

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

Statement by Mr. Barriga, Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the United Nations.

We welcome this open debate and thank your delegation, Mr. President, for its useful concept paper (S/2013/335). While a continued emphasis on protection issues is crucial, we call at the same time for the same level of emphasis on the participation pillar of this agenda.

In recent years, we have witnessed an alarming increase in the documented use of sexual violence in armed conflict, often as a method of warfare to achieve military goals. Much remains to be done in terms of an effective response. Ending impunity is clearly a central element in this respect. Unfortunately, however, we must acknowledge that, in practice, the fight to end impunity has barely begun. Effective justice for victims of sexual violence in conflict continues to be a great exception to the rule.

The necessary work to that end is closely linked to broader efforts to strengthen justice and the rule of law. An effective judicial response requires States themselves to strengthen domestic justice systems in all their aspects, where appropriate, with the assistance of international donors and agencies. Particular emphasis should be placed on procedures that allow victims and witnesses to come forward while minimizing the risk of reprisals and that take into account the severe trauma that may have been inflicted on them.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) also has an important role to play, and we were therefore somewhat surprised not to see the ICC mentioned explicitly in the concept paper. The work of the Court can serve in particular as an incentive for Governments to deliver accountability at the domestic level. The Court can also assist such work by providing information and evidence for use in domestic proceedings, and it is well known that the ICC Prosecutor has made the fight against sexual violence a focus of her work.

The Security Council should more often call on Governments to prioritize the strengthening of domestic justice systems, but it should also be more assertive where national systems fail, through the establishment of fact-finding commissions, commissions of inquiry and referrals to the ICC. Where domestic justice systems have broken down completely, such measures may often be the only way of creating deterrence and enabling longer-term justice. Evidence needs to be professionally collected at the earliest possible stages, a process that may be assisted inter alia by the Justice Rapid Response initiative.

The Council's ability to respond depends on the availability of objective, accurate and reliable information. Monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements and the work of the women's protection advisers are therefore of continued relevance.

There seems to be a major design flaw in our current national and international efforts to bring about justice for crimes of sexual violence — the voices of victims are rarely heard. This is lamentable and counterproductive, because a greater role for victims in this discourse could have a strong impact on the willingness of the relevant actors to bring about change.

To conclude, I would briefly like to recall that sexual violence also affects men and boys, as stated in the concept paper. In this context, we would like to inform delegations about the next session of our lecture series on women and peace and security. It will take place on 8 or 9 July and will focus on the role of men as perpetrators but also as victims of sexual violence in conflict.