

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict
16th-17th December 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Mr. Araud, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations

France joins in the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union.

I welcome the initiative of the United States presidency of the Council to convene this open debate. In adopting resolution 1888 (2009) last year, the Security Council improved the regime for combating sexual violence in armed conflict. My delegation reiterates its support for the work of Ms. Wallström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We welcome the progress made towards strengthening the rule of law in countries in conflict. We welcome the firm commitment of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, led by Alain Le Roy, and the contribution of civil society and non-governmental organizations. Resolution 1960 (2010), adopted today, will support that momentum. UN Women must play its full role in those common efforts.

At the same time, the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/604) gives cause for alarm. Sexual violence continues to be used as a weapon of war by parties to conflicts in a number of regions worldwide. We all recall the mass rapes committed in Walikale this past summer, and we expect the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to inform the Security Council about measures taken to assist the victims and to combat impunity.

Beyond that tragic situation, no one can remain impassive to the violence perpetrated in the Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Burma against women belonging to minority ethnic groups, or in Côte d'Ivoire, where recent developments have caused increased concern. We expect that procedures carried out in Guinea following the crimes perpetrated in the Conakry stadium in September 2009 will be rapidly completed. However, we welcome the development of a strategy to combat sexual violence in Chad and the establishment of a special tribunal in Liberia.

The United Nations has a particular responsibility with regard to the phenomenon of sexual violence. Indeed, peacekeeping operations must establish strategies on sexual violence. Gender advisors, advisors on the protection of women, and human rights units have a vital role to play in this context. It is also essential to engage in dialogue with parties to armed conflict on the issue of sexual violence. Every opportunity must be taken to educate the parties on their obligations and to encourage them to change their behaviour. The fight against sexual violence must be accompanied by programmes to assist victims and provide them with care and opportunities for rehabilitation.

Given the scope of the challenges to be addressed by the United Nations, France welcomes the Council's resolve in this area. The resolution we adopted today has three main areas of progress. First, it will allow the Council to receive reliable information in real time on which to base its actions. France therefore supports the establishment of procedures to monitor, analyse and communicate information on situations of concern.

The Council has set political parameters: coherence and coordination on the ground, on the one hand, and respect for the integrity and specificity of the mechanism to protect children in armed conflict, on the other. In that context, the United Nations and all its entities must now work to establish the most effective system possible on the ground.

The resolution then provides a way to list parties who commit systematic sexual violence. That represents important progress in harmonizing human rights protection regimes established by the Council to the benefit of women and children. Implementing these measures will require strengthened cooperation between Ms. Coomaraswamy and Ms. Wallström.

The resolution finally strengthens the prospects of sanctions against the perpetrators and those responsible for sexual violence. It is vital that the Council systematically examine the possibility of including sexual violence as a criteria for sanctions during the establishment or review of the mandates of sanctions committees. The resolution requests the parties to make specific commitments and to implement them on the ground. Among these, we attach particular importance to the fight against impunity. Allow me to reiterate here the contribution

of the International Criminal Court in cases where sexual violence constitutes war crimes, crimes against humanity or crimes of genocide.

In conclusion, our commitment to combating sexual violence is inseparable from the framework of follow-up to resolution 1325 (2000) in strengthening the role of women in conflict prevention and settlement and in peacebuilding.