

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

Statement by Nwaf Salan, Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations

First, I wish to thank you, Madame, for organizing today's open debate. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Special Representative Wallström, Under-Secretary-General Le Roy and Lieutenant General Gaye for their comprehensive briefings.

Wartime sexual violence has been the subject of one of history's greatest silences for long enough. While the Security Council has adopted landmark resolutions to try to combat what has been termed a weapon of war, United Nations actors on the ground still lack the necessary tools to fight this war crime.

Resolution 1960 (2010), adopted by the Council today, provides them with some of these needed tools. The Council has requested the Secretary-General to list, in an annex to his annual report, parties that are credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the Security Council's agenda. Hence, the Council is not only signalling to rapists in conflict zones around the world that their acts will no longer go unchecked, but also opening the way for more direct and constructive United Nations engagement with those parties, upon whom we call to make specific and time-bound commitments to combating sexual violence.

Sexual violence is not inevitable. It is not cultural and should not be considered as collateral damage. When used systematically as a weapon of war, its purpose is to break the will of people by dominating them in humiliating and dehumanizing ways. It has dire consequences not only on the populations against whom it is perpetrated, but also on international peace and security, as it poses enduring challenges to durable stability and social cohesion. It is therefore our collective responsibility to put an end to it.

It is my Government's hope that today's resolution will establish formal monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence, and generate insightful analysis of trends and patterns to better protect affected populations and inform targeted measures. It is also important to further reinforce trust between local communities and United Nations peacekeeping missions on the ground and to establish effective channels of communication that would provide timely and accurate information in the event of rapes.

Female peacekeepers and women protection advisors are crucial in this sense. Where they have been present, local populations have more readily reported on instances of sexual violence. Today's resolution unequivocally supports their presence and the need to mainstream them. Furthermore, we welcome the development by the Secretariat of scenario-based training materials on combating sexual violence for peacekeepers, and we encourage Member States to use them.

Although the tools we have formalized today through resolution 1960 (2010) will undoubtedly make a difference in our efforts to end conflicts through a fair and lasting peace, the accompanying establishment of functional governmental institutions and the rule of law remain the international community's best bet for providing populations with the protection they deserve, for ending impunity and for enabling victims and communities to begin their painstaking recovery.

My country welcomes the adoption of resolution 1960 (2010) today and the clear signal it sends from the international community to perpetrators of the savage crimes of sexual violence around the world that we will not stand idly by as the bodies of women are turned into battlegrounds and that those perpetrators will be held accountable for their acts.