

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

Statement by H.E. Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations

I thank you, Madame President, for organizing this important debate. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström, UnderSecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy and the Military Adviser, General Gaye, for their briefings.

Uganda considers sexual violence as a serious health, human rights and development problem. There can be no peace, security or sustainable economic development in societies that deny human rights, including the human rights of women. We are concerned that, despite the existence of regional and international instruments on women's human rights, sexual violence continues to be committed at an alarming rate, both in times of peace and during armed conflicts, thus undermining the right of women to fulfil their potential. Uganda abhors sexual violence and condemns it unreservedly. The use of sexual violence as a tactic of war has been documented in many parts of the world that have experienced armed conflict, including our region. Armed groups, such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and the Lord's Resistance Army, have terrorized the population, leaving mayhem, pain and death in their wake.

Many formerly abducted women and girls still suffer from the devastating consequences of their period of sexual slavery, and a high number of them have given birth to children in captivity. That has impacted severely on the mental and physical health of survivors, in both the short and the long term. However, while the spotlight has focused on the situation in the African Great Lakes region, all forms of sexual violence have been and continue to be documented in situations of armed conflict the world over. Indeed, we agree with the Secretary-General, who has stated in his report that sexual violence is not specific to any era, culture or continent, but traverses all of history and geography.

At the regional level, the Great Lakes region has taken important steps to address sexual violence. On 18 June 2008, just one day before the adoption of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) committed themselves under what became known as the Goma Declaration to eradicate all forms of gender-based violence. The Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region has a specific protocol on the prevention and suppression of sexual violence against women and children and model legislation on the suppression of sexual violence against women and children.

Those instruments complement other national, regional and global policy and legal frameworks to which Uganda is a party. They serve to emphasize that such sexual violence is not a new or unknown phenomenon that has been ignored, but that the region is determined to put an end to such cowardly acts. The ICGLR secretariat has, in recent times and in collaboration with the United Nations, undertaken activities to draw the attention of member countries to the seriousness of the problem and to come to agreement on commitments to end violence against women and children. We welcome and encourage that collaborative effort.

The Government of Uganda is committed to the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), and 1889 (2009), as well as the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region (2008). Uganda welcomes the progress made in rendering operational the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law to assist national authorities to strengthen the rule of law in accordance with resolution 1888 (2009).

We also welcome the inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions in civil, military and police functions. Ugandan women, and particularly those in military and police forces, are currently engaged in peacekeeping missions in the region and around the world. We are convinced that, wherever they are based, their presence has a positive influence and may encourage women from local communities to report all acts of sexual violence.

Uganda also welcomes the idea of establishing monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-

related sexual violence, including rape in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict, and other situations relevant to the implementation of resolution 1888 (2009).

We are confident that that will assist the Council's consideration of appropriate actions, including targeted and graduated measures levelled at parties to armed conflict that are listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual reports on sexual violence in conflict.

We thank the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström, for her work. We encourage her to take advantage of the existing legal and policy frameworks, including those in our region, to strengthen support and partnerships to put an end to the vice of sexual violence.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that there are no conditions that can either justify or excuse such actions that destroy the very essence of the human spirit of the victim and those closest to them. We should, therefore collectively remain resolute in dealing with sexual violence.