

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

**8234**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 16 April 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of Liechtenstein, Ms. Oehri:**

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Eight resolutions adopted by the Council reflect the significant progress we have made in the area of women, peace and security. In resolution 1820 (2008), the Council recognized for the first time that sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide. A decade later, patterns of sexual violence remain a sad reality in many conflict situations, and effective responses have been rare.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/250) documents sexual violence including rape, sexual slavery or forced prostitution, pregnancy, abortion, sterilization and marriage in 19 conflict situations, committed by 47 parties. Patterns of sexual violence are often embedded in and compounded by underlying structural conditions such as inequality, gender-based discrimination and the violation of minority rights.

The empowerment of women is therefore a key ingredient of an effective response. This requires the increased representation of women in mechanisms to address conflicts and the incorporation of a gender perspective in conflict resolution and peace processes.

The situation of the Rohingya community is of high relevance to our discussion and we welcome the presence of an advocate for the Rohingya today. Many of the 700,000 civilians fleeing Rakhine state to Bangladesh have endured physical and psychological sexual assault. Rape, sexual slavery and other forms of grave sexual violence have mostly been committed against Rohingya women and girls. Those who have fled are vulnerable to further violations, including trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage or sexual exploitation. We commend the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) for exploring the option of investigating the deportation of the Rohingya community as a crime against humanity. This is precisely the type of situation for which the ICC was created, and the Council should refer it to the Court.

In Syria, sexual violence has been used as tactic of war and as part of an attack against the civilian population, committed by various parties to the conflict with rampant impunity. It is shocking in particular that not a single member of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has been prosecuted for

sexual violence offenses as of yet. The International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, created by the General Assembly in light of paralysis in the Security Council, has made sexual and gender-based violence a priority of its work. We call on all States to cooperate with the Mechanism by sharing relevant information and through financial support.

Accountability is an essential part of the fight against conflict-related sexual violence. International criminal justice mechanisms have done groundbreaking work. The finding in the Akayesu case before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda that sexual violence can amount to genocide was a landmark decision. Of comparable relevance was the verdict of the ICC in finding Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo criminally responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity for sexual violence on the basis of command responsibility. The Prosecutor of the ICC has made sexual and gender-based violence crimes one of her strategic priorities as a reflection of the very progressive stance of the Rome Statute, adopted 20 years ago, on sexual and gender-based violence. Justice Rapid Response has also done invaluable work to investigate sexual and gender-based violence.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence, but we must not ignore the fact that many men and boys become victims as well. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/250) documents incidents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Syria. The rape and sexual torture of men and boys are all too commonly practiced in detention settings, often aimed at extracting confessions during interrogation. Such patterns continue to be underreported, owing to cultural taboos and fear of being stigmatized. Sexual violence against men and boys in situations of armed conflict warrants our increased attention in order to inform our response to gender-based sexual violence overall, with accountability and necessary services to victims as key components.