

**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 The Maldives, Mr. Mohamed:**

I wish to thank the Government of Peru, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of April, for convening this important open debate. Ten years ago, the Council adopted resolution 1820 (2008), which recognized that sexual violence was being used as a tactic of war and could therefore be included in the category of war crimes.

Today's open debate provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress made and evaluate the way forward in implementing the Council's resolutions that aim at preventing sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

The Maldives strongly condemns how sexual violence is being weaponized by targeting victims based on ethnic, religious or political affiliation, which destroys social cohesion, leading to forced displacement and the deprivation of economic resources. We note with concern that the failure to address those issues has led to desperate recourse to more harmful practices, including child marriage, withdrawal from educational and employment opportunities, and resort to commercial sexual exploitation.

We are pleased to note that progress has been made in a number of countries. We must ensure that this progress is based on evidence about the reality of the situation on the ground. Ensuring that all cases of sexual violence are reported is crucial in strengthening justice mechanisms and accountability.

Unfortunately, the majority of those cases remain unreported owing to social stigma often attached to the victims of the crime, fear of reprisals and the systematic barriers and obstacles that the victims have to overcome. Increased awareness about the nature of the crime, changes in perceptions of social taboos and having an efficient and reliable framework to identify sexual exploitation are necessary to establish the first step towards ending impunity and ensuring accountability.

We also note that there are commonalities in the recommendations for those countries, including strengthening legal frameworks, the provision of access to justice, socioeconomic support for victims, strict screening and training of armed and security forces, and strengthening frameworks to enhance cooperation with the United Nations to ensure prevention and response measures. Most of the victims are women and girls from marginalized rural communities who do not always benefit from full legal protections and often face cultural taboos regarding sexual violence.

Therefore, Member States should not only strive to extend the reach of the rule of law to all communities, but also ensure that the law itself provides protection to the victims through alignment with international human rights standards on sexual violence and abuse. We believe that the greater representation of women in governance, especially on the part of women from rural communities, would raise the profile of those issues and facilitate positive change. In addition, we also support community mobilization campaigns, led by community and religious leaders, aimed at shifting the stigma of sexual violence from the victims to the perpetrators.

We wish to underscore the responsibilities of armed forces and peacekeeping operations in preventing sexual violence in conflict. It is important not only to ensure training in international humanitarian and human rights law in the specific context of sexual exploitation, but also to establish strict monitoring and accountability within those systems in order to prevent abuse by those actors themselves. In that regard, we are pleased to note that United Nations peacekeeping operations with mandates on the protection of civilians have established monitoring arrangements and incorporated early warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence.

The Maldives supports the Secretary-General's preventative approach and believes that early warning indicators should help prevent sexual violence in conflict-prone areas, in addition to post-conflict situations, and that this should be factored in when evaluating risks to peace and security in the Council. In that regard, we wish to emphasize the importance of ensuring adequate funding for sexual violence programmes in conflict-affected situations.

It is clear that sexual exploitation and abuse are not just a consequence of conflict, but can also be a weapon that exacerbates conflicts. Addressing the root causes and ending impunity is the key to ensuring that this heinous crime is brought to an end. We all need to work together to find shared solutions to ensure that all women, men, girls and boys whose lives are already tarnished with conflict are not permanently scarred by the consequences of sexual violence.