

Ms. Mabunda Lioko (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on women and peace and security, and sexual violence in conflict. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; Mr. Adama Dieng, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and Ms. Mina Jaf, Executive Director of Women's Refugee Route, as well as you, Mr. President, for your statements this morning.

We also wish to congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her nomination to serve as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as successor to Ms. Bangura, to whom we pay a sincere tribute for her exemplary work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the rest of the target countries.

As the President remarked, this debate is the appropriate venue for sharing our experiences and efforts with the United Nations since 2013 in the framework of the technical assistance provided. In that regard, while there is a link between the lack of physical security and sexual violence, history will never forget that eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo faced a decade of conflict and its attendant phenomenon of the rape of women. That has been the spark for our debate to this day. We will recall that rape, used as a war tactic, was often accompanied by other atrocious acts, as in the case of Walikale, mentioned this morning and to which I will refer later.

Two years ago in this forum, my country launched an initiative to strengthen the situation of Congolese women, and I am pleased to note that the killing of women by Congolese citizens has gradually declined since 2013. Our country has engaged in this struggle by decreeing a zero-tolerance policy, which is no longer a mere slogan, and by setting an example at the highest level. Even the President of the Republic of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has sought to indicate this political will by creating the office I have led since 2014, which is an observatory to coordinate and facilitate various initiatives to counter sexual violence. We note that, despite the residual challenges, a defining turning point has been reached by our country, as recognized in resolutions 2277 (2016) and 2348 (2017) and in successive relevant reports of the Secretary-General since 2015.

But we can take nothing for granted. How do we go from past horrors to a beginning of post-conflict normality? With the help of the United Nations, since the signing of the joint communiqué of 30 March, 2013, our Government has designed and deployed a plan of action to combat sexual violence. It has mobilized all the energies of the nation, especially the Ministries of Justice and National Defence, the defence and security forces, the General Auditorate, civil society organizations, and religious and traditional leaders. Much of this normalization programme is based on prevention, the fight against impunity and the socioeconomic response that I will address in this statement. Beyond technical principles and terms known to us all, these are lessons of humanity, experiments in living together, stories of distress or hope that we champion

on a daily basis, claim as our own, and refuse to deny or stigmatize.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has enacted the law of 20 July 2006 and applies the Rome Statute, which punishes sexual violence. Consequently, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo adopted a campaign plan, led by the internal Specialized Commission for the Fight against Sexual Violence, which has been carrying out awareness-raising activities in all military camps for three years. The Commission is supported by the United Nations system.

The implementation of this plan of action has enabled the development and signing of acts of solemn commitment by 218 commanders, including generals and colonels as well as 13,585 trained soldiers throughout all of the military camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are not only concerned about the eastern part in conflict, but about the 26 provinces, in order to ensure the sustainability of the culture of the fight against sexual violence. The Congolese national police is part of that dynamic, thereby reinforcing police capacities.

In order that women lead that fight, as they have been agents of change since 2014, four women have been promoted to the rank of general, which is extraordinary in Africa. One of them heads the army's civic education unit. In the wake of that a campaign known as "Breaking the Silence" was launched with a toll-free number to enable 22 million Congolese telecommunication subscribers in rural areas to report rape cases. From the outset of the campaign, more Congolese men were calling to denounce cases affecting their nieces or neighbours, which shows that Congolese men are supporting the women in eradicating the scourge.

Is that enough? Most certainly it is not. Yet it is a significant step. Such prevention efforts would be insufficient if not accompanied by pedagogical value. But the fight against impunity has been a triggering factor in our progress. Since 2015, our office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, has supported regular annual judicial inspections by senior judges who assess on the ground the recorded cases of sexual violence, including the manner and speed with which they are processed by civil and military courts throughout all of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — namely, our 146 territories.

Mobile courts are regularly scheduled by the Ministry of Justice in rural areas at the scene of the crime, with the support of the Government and at times specialized United Nations agencies. I cannot cite all of them, however the Office of the Special Representative and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights actively participate in mobilizing the rural courts.

As a result of those rounds, in 2016 throughout the national territory the military courts achieved 225 convictions, compared to 111 decisions in 2014, showing an increase of 50 per cent in three years. To note, the Arusha Criminal Court produced 90 decisions in 10 years, at the start of the new policy dealing with war crimes and international crimes.

To clarify any confusion about some of today's issues, turning to the military justice decisions, it is important to highlight and note that senior and other military commanders have been tried and convicted of rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — for example, the sentencing of General Kakwavu in November 2014 and that of Colonels Engangela, known as the “Terminator”, and Kibibi Mutware in 2015. That demonstrates that justice acts firmly to punish criminals, without regard to rank or position.

Furthermore, with regard to the emblematic cases cited in the Secretary-General's report, I will mention two: the case in Walikale, which was discussed this morning involving the warlord Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, and the case in Kavumu. The case of Walikale concerns mass rape committed by Sheka and his accomplices, including Captain Serafin Lionso. Captain Lionso was arrested and imprisoned in April 2016. We requested that he be transferred from the high security prison in Angenga, in the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and brought before the military court in Goma, in the eastern part. The distance between the place of detention and the crime site is equal to the distance between the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. Such are the challenges we face each day.

On the other hand, with respect to the often cited rape cases involving the young children of Kavumu, the accused, a provincial official named Batumike, was arrested and his parliamentary immunity immediately waived in August 2016, in order to charge him. No one should be protected if he is the perpetrator of rape.

Today some Council members recommended that we document our best practices. I believe it is a good idea. Indeed, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has just published a compendium of military judicial decisions from 2010 to 2015, compiled in a document entitled *Bulletin of Decisions of the High Military Court*. That jurisprudence will provide a realistic and useful overview of the implementation of the fight against impunity on the ground, and of the challenges. While seeking to strengthen those achievements, our country is ready to share its experience with other countries in conflict affected by this scourge.

By way of example, we took part, along with the United Nations, in the appointment of a senior Congolese magistrate, formerly of the general auditor, Colonel Mutanzini, as Special Prosecutor to the Special Court of the Central African Republic. Furthermore, recently the Congolese special police unit for the protection of women and children was approached by the Government of the Central African Republic regarding the training of a special police unit in that area.

It is important to point out that intra-African solutions initiated by indigenous people are helpful in furthering progress in the struggle. We welcome the support of the African Union.

There is no need to punish the executioner; we must also look after the victims stigmatized by a socioeconomic response. We are proud to announce that thanks to the Governments of Japan and the Democratic Republic of the

Congo and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for two years we have been able to offer free apprenticeship training to 1,500 survivors of sexual violence and returned child soldiers. The unprecedented coalition of public institutions, private actors, NGOs and bilateral and multilateral development partners will ensure that our crusade's efforts in reaching out to all levels of society will have every chance of success.

Nevertheless, reparation and compensation for the victims remains a challenge. In response, on 3 April I went before the Parliament, accompanied by 130 Congolese NGOs, including those in non-conflict zones, to submit a draft bill to improve the compensation for victims.

Moreover, with respect to medical issues, we mourn the death of Dr. Byamungu, a colleague of Dr. Mukwege of Panzi Hospital. There are ongoing investigations. We continue, by way of public institutions and the Government's available resources, to support both public and private hospitals in providing better care to victims. That is what we are doing with Japan to enlarge the hospital in Kintambo. That is also what we did in 2016 with regard to the Karibuni Wamama Medical Centre and the non-governmental organization Solidarité féminine pour la paix et le développement intégral in Bunia.

All of those initiatives, we hope, will facilitate the gradual decline in cases of sexual violence even if we have not yet completely eliminated cases of rape.

Lastly, after its three years of work, I would like to acknowledge and commend the contribution of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and its group of experts for the excellent cooperation that allowed us to implement the joint communiqué with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the fight against sexual violence in conflict.

We must also thank all of those who, since 2014, have made the realization of that progress possible, showed no scepticism with regard to the good will of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and have remained by our side down that long road: the regional non-governmental organizations that joined us in the struggle; the Congolese Government, which, despite security-related constraints, has allocated a specific budget for our office's work since 2014; and the Government of Japan, either directly or through the intermediary of the Office of the Special Representative, in collaboration with UN-Women and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

It is perhaps that collaborative work that has led to the decline of reported cases of sexual violence in the successive reports of the Secretary-General. We went from 15,352 cases reported in 2013 to 1,734 in 2016 — an 85 per cent decrease in three years. That is not a victory but the beginning of something that is attributable to the will of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the active synergy of our helpful partners standing alongside us. It is no accident. It is the result of hard, daily work and an example of collective will manifested at the highest levels of the State.

In the light of that report, we reiterate the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue the struggle to provide additional rights and an increased sense of peace and well-being to the women of that country who were once humiliated by unpunished rapes.

In that regard, my country will welcome with interest, during 2017-2108, technical discussions more focused on a precise road map pertaining to consolidating the progress made with a view towards delisting scenarios.