

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

8234th meeting
Monday, 16 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of NATO, Ms. Hutchinson:**

I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council as the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security.

NATO's mandate is based on the alliance's core values: democracy, individual liberty and rule of law—themes that resonate so clearly with the women and peace and security agenda. The adoption of the women and peace and security resolutions and the work of the Council has established a new course in understanding and responding to the grievous, systematic sexual abuse of women and girls in and around conflict. Awareness that conflict-related sexual violence affects not only women and girls, but also entire communities, is now entrenched in our collective thinking.

The international community has a responsibility to better protect women, but we know that protection cannot exist without the promotion of women's rights and acceptance that women's full participation in all decision-making is critical. The elevation of sexual violence as an international peace-and-security issue has led to an increased expectation that actors, including NATO, take a more prominent role in addressing this issue. Without adequate response, conflict-related sexual violence will continue to significantly jeopardize stabilization efforts, as well as sustainable post-conflict reconstruction.

At NATO, we understand that protection is at the core of the women and peace and security mandate. NATO-led forces have a responsibility to protect and defend women against violence, but we also recognize that that cannot be, nor should be, separated from the issue of empowerment and participation. There can be no protection without participation.

Under the auspices of the NATO policy on women and peace and security and its action plan, we address sexual violence through a comprehensive approach, as part of the wider women and peace and security framework. The development of military guidelines to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence has given us a base from which to work and serves as a practical tool.

However, we recognize that efforts must be coordinated with other international organizations and civil society. For that reason, we have established a civil society advisory panel to garner the views of women not only from within our borders, but also, and more important, the views of women from crisis areas, to help steer our work. Women must be visible in voicing mechanisms for protection.

Earlier this year, NATO joined forces with United Nations Special Envoy Angelina Jolie to advance the issue of conflict-related sexual violence by mainstreaming efforts through all our core tasks and functions. We believe that NATO has an opportunity to be a leading protector of women's rights, drawing on the strengths and capabilities of its nations and working with more than 40 partner countries.

At NATO, we tackle protection through a holistic approach to address the wider issues that affect women in conflict and post-conflict situations. We focus on the importance of protecting women and girls from violence, but we place equal emphasis on the necessity of supporting and enhancing women's participation. We recognize that the best defence against sexual violence is prevention. We attempt to make gender equality a central tenant of all our efforts, and we are emphasizing and expanding areas of prevention. The adoption of early-warning indicators, strengthened civil society dialogue and reinforced public diplomacy have reinforced our efforts.

Ultimately, in tackling the issue of abuse and addressing sexual violence against women and girls, we do more than help individual victims; we set a tone for respect of fundamental dignities and human rights. In doing so, we can lay a foundation for lasting stability.