

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

8234th meeting
Monday, 16 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of Norway, Mr. Sætre:**

I make this statement on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

At the outset, I would like to thank Peru for organizing this important debate. Sexual violence is increasingly being used as a weapon or a tactic of war. We know that domestic violence also increases as tensions in society grow. The chaos of conflict often prepares the ground for further unreported and unprosecuted abuse. Women are always vulnerable in conflict. Violent extremists often target women specifically and strategically, undermining women's rights and security. Sexual violence makes up a significant part of extremist violence.

Sexual violence is often seen as inevitable in conflict. We do not agree. That attitude encourages impunity and silences survivors. The challenges are immense and include insufficient protection mechanisms, inadequate rule of law, weak judicial systems, poor services for survivors, stigmatization of victims and witnesses, structural discrimination and economic and social inequalities.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a violation of both international human rights law and international humanitarian law. It can be a war crime, a crime against humanity or an act of genocide. The International Criminal Court plays a vital role in the fight against impunity, but States have the primary duty to prevent and investigate cases and to prosecute the perpetrators. Strengthening the capacity of national institutions, both during peacetime and in conflict, is therefore critical.

Sexual violence is eroding the societies we are striving to stabilize and rebuild. It is destroying the future as well as the present for many more than the women and girls, men and boys directly affected. Preventing and responding to sexual- and gender-based violence is a priority for the Nordic countries. In our mediation work, we strive to ensure that victims are heard and that amnesty for sexual crimes is not accepted. We are working hard to increase the number of women deployed to international operations, because we believe that diverse teams deliver better. We train all our personnel to ensure that those who are entrusted with people's lives can in fact be trusted. We contribute specialized police teams to United Nations peace operations.

Together with the United Nations, we are developing a whole-of-mission handbook for United Nations operations on how to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. We cooperate with the African Union and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women,

Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop, supporting the life-saving services provided by the United Nations Population Fund to survivors, and the efforts of UN-Women and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure a gendered humanitarian response.

We work with Ms. Patten, the Group of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and we support Justice Rapid Response and UN-Women's training of experts, as well as the Gender Standby Capacity. Our civil society partners provide psychosocial and legal support and engage in livelihood programmes. Moreover, our academic partners provide knowledge that informs our policy decisions. The Nordic countries underscore the pivotal importance of gender equality and women's empowerment, as highlighted in the concept note (S/2018/311, annex).

Without the full and effective participation of women at all levels, we will not be able to prevent conflict-related sexual violence or respond effectively. We need a broad, coordinated response. The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies, the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network and the emerging alliance of networks of women mediators are all important steps in the right direction. Today's discussion is not about victims but survivors, who are entitled to protection and justice. They must be enabled to participate in rebuilding their societies. Only then will peace be sustainable.

A longer version of this statement will be available online.