

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

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

We commend Peru for convening today's important debate. Poland aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the observer of the European Union. I would like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her remarks. I also thank Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her comprehensive briefing. We greatly appreciate her tireless and dedicated work. We are honoured by the presence of Ms. Razia Sultana among us today, and we deeply appreciated her moving and inspirational testimony on behalf of the Rohingya women and girls who have suffered from sexual violence.

As a voice representing civil society, hers is important for all of us to hear. We are outraged by the persistent and widespread incidence of sexual violence in armed conflict. As many speakers have noted, sexual violence is increasingly used as a tactic of warfare and constitutes a flagrant and unacceptable violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. We are all aware that the already staggering number of reported cases of sexual violence in conflict represents a mere fraction of the true number.

One of the greatest challenges that the victims of these crimes are facing is the lack of accountability for their perpetrators. The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/250) highlights the various challenges that we face in addressing conflict-related sexual violence. I would like to emphasize three areas that merit our particular attention today.

First, we welcome the focus of this year's report on economic empowerment as a tool for eliminating conflict-related sexual violence. Poverty and social exclusion are risk factors associated with gender-based violence. The economic empowerment of women means ensuring proper funding for programmes that address the economic and social needs of survivors, as well as implementing initiatives aimed at changing the conditions that enable violence to occur in the first place. We also believe that there is a need for a broader discussion in the Security Council of the importance of women's economic empowerment in post-conflict settings in more general terms. Peacebuilding and recovery funding still largely ignore women's economic role.

Let me now turn to the second question of the stigmatization of victims of sexual violence. Beyond the immediate cruelty of sexual violence and its consequences, victims are still all too often stigmatized and rejected by their families and communities. In their desire to avoid stigma and discrimination, the

majority of victims do not report rape or other forms of sexual violence. That not only contributes to a culture of impunity, it also prevents survivors of sexual violence from accessing medical care and legal assistance.

We support the Secretary-General's call to traditional, religious and community leaders to address harmful social norms and help to redirect the stigma of rape from the victims to the perpetrators. In particular, we want to draw attention to the social stigma experienced by children conceived through rape. Women with children born of sexual violence are the most marginalized of all. Children born of rape are often ostracized by their families and communities. Children living on the margins of societies are not only deprived of basic human rights, but are at a higher risk of being recruited by armed and organized-crime groups, thereby posing a direct threat to peace and security.

My third point relates to sexual violence directed against men and boys in armed conflicts. We welcome the attention that the Secretary-General's report gives to this issue. The devastating effects of sexual violence on male survivors and their families should be discussed openly in this forum. The great reluctance of many men and boys to report sexual violence makes it very difficult to accurately assess its scope. Almost certainly, the limited statistics that exist vastly understate the number of male victims. For male survivors, sexual violence remains hidden owing to cultural taboos. The hesitancy of male survivors to speak about sexual violence makes impunity for such crimes even more likely. We urge States to remove all structural and legal obstacles that prevent the investigation and prosecution of rape and other forms of sexual violence committed against men and boys.

The latest Secretary-General's report makes it clear that we should spare no effort in combating sexual violence. Only by shedding light on the issue can we lift the long shadow of sexual violence in conflict from all its survivors and prevent it from happening in the future.