

Archbishop Auza:

The Holy See thanks the Uruguayan presidency for bringing this unsettling topic to an open debate in this Chamber, and thus to the entire international community.

My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2017/249) on conflict-related sexual violence, which describes the horrendous impact these crimes have on women and girls and on entire communities.

The term “conflict-related sexual violence” covers a wide range of sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriage, as well as trafficking in persons, when perpetrated in situations of conflict for the purpose of sexual violence or exploitation. As appalling and criminal as these forms of sexual violence are, my delegation wishes to draw specific attention to the use of sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of terrorism.

The motives behind this particularly heinous crime, enumerated in the Secretary-General’s report, constitutes a litany of evil that includes incentivizing the recruitment of terrorists, terrorizing and displacing populations, forcing religious conversion through marriage, suppressing women’s fundamental rights, generating revenues through sex trafficking, extorting ransom from desperate families, giving women and girls as war spoils to compensate fighters, who are then entitled to resell or to exploit them as they wish, and using women and girls as human shields and suicide bombers. The immeasurable suffering of so many women, who continue today to be victims of such cruelty, cannot but put fire under our feet to spur us all to action. The Holy See therefore appeals to the international community through the Security Council to give priority to this particularly horrendous violence against women and children.

There is no need of further evidence to document the fact that women and girls are being specifically targeted as a tactic in order to incite fear, crush their will and generate revenues for the terror machine. Pope Francis has reminded the diplomatic community that we must not overlook the horrendous crime of rape in conflict, which is a most grave offense against the dignity of women, who are not only violated in body but also in spirit, resulting in a trauma hard to erase and with effects on entire societies as well.

In the face of these heinous crimes, there exists, first for States and then for the international community, a grave responsibility to protect those who are exposed to war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide or ethnic cleansing. The international community is called upon to encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility. Conflict-related sexual violence, in particular sexual violence as an instrument of terrorism, undoubtedly falls within this pressing and profound responsibility to protect. The prevailing impunity of those who have committed such crimes clearly illustrates the urgency of fulfilling this duty.

The urgent need to act in order to spare women and girls from becoming prey for such atrocious tactics in conflicts should accompany, and even embolden, States’ common efforts and resolute will to bring conflicts to an end and to adopt coordinated solutions through dialogue and mediation efforts and through post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation measures. There is no need to recall also that the role of women in such an endeavour is

essential. It should not be an afterthought or considered simply as something politically correct, but rather as an indispensable contribution to all our peace and security efforts designed to spare our world from further scourges of war and violence.

A week ago, Pope Francis once again warned that the culture of destruction is spreading throughout the world and that we are experiencing a new massacre of men and women and children who suffer and die as a result of war and migration, or who are being exploited for someone else's personal interests. In response to this culture of violence, the world, especially the women and girls whose dignity is being savagely violated, looks to the Security Council for hope and action. Let us remember their faces and show them by our action that they do not hope in vain.