

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

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

I thank you, Sir, for convening today's debate, which allows us to reflect on the best strategies to prevent sexual violence in conflict.

Switzerland has always advocated a preventive approach with regard to conflict and violence. By preventing sexual violence, we not only protect individuals from one of the most brutal forms of violence; we also protect entire societies. The good news is that the tools needed to implement a preventive approach, such as access to justice, gender equality and empowerment are all well-known and at our disposal.

First, allow me to address access to justice, which remains a major challenge for all survivors of sexual violence, especially in places affected by conflict, where judicial systems are weak or non-existent. The widespread fear of reprisals and stigma discourages victims from coming forward. Law enforcement agencies are therefore important partners in the fight against violence. That is why Switzerland supports police and armed forces by training them in compliance with legislation and taking victim-centred approaches in the handling cases of sexual violence. The first step is often to increase public trust in the police. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we have been lending our support to the police in holding open-door days for the local people. In Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Nepal, Switzerland has worked with local police forces to set up special police units to deal with cases of family sexual and gender-based violence. Switzerland has also prioritized efforts to support the review of national laws, promote legal aid and provide survivors with psychosocial counselling throughout the judicial process. We also encourage and support efforts to improve the documentation of rape and other forms of sexual violence against men and boys in situations of armed conflict to more effectively deal with such crimes.

Secondly, I would like to turn to gender equality as the principle means of prevention. There is a strong empirical connection between the lack of gender equality in a society and the readiness to take up arms. A thorough analysis of the dynamics of gender equality can therefore help to design tailor-made programmes to prevent conflicts from breaking out. For that reason, Switzerland's fourth national action plan on women, peace and security will also focus on promoting gender-responsive security sector reform and the deployment of mixed teams in military and police units. The national action plan further recognizes the need for women's economic empowerment as a precondition for equal participation in

peacebuilding. However, it is not enough to simply focus on empowering women; initiatives need to gain the support of all family members to advocate women's financial independence.

Thirdly, I would now like to speak on empowerment. We are not talking only about women's empowerment. Men also need empowerment and education in order to transform traditional gender-relations and put an end to harmful behavioural patterns. It is crucial to include men and boys, whether as allies, potential victims, perpetrators and champions for gender-equality, in any conflict and violence prevention strategy.