

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

8234th meeting

Monday, 16 April 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of the United Kingdom, Ms. Pierce:**

As a number of speakers have noted today, the Charter of the United Nations makes clear that the United Nations was established to protect the dignity and worth of the human person. We therefore join our other colleagues in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate. I emphatically appeal to all speakers not to politicize this issue — one of the worst afflictions we face in modern times.

I think it behooves all of us to treat the issue as a common problem that we are all committed to mitigating and eventually eradicating. For the avoidance of doubt, let me say incredibly clearly that the United Kingdom salutes the courage of Ms. Sultana in her fantastic work — I am very glad that we had the chance to hear about it before the Security Council undertakes a mission to Bangladesh and Myanmar — and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her efforts and the very comprehensive briefing that she gave us today. I think it is really positive that so many Members of the United Nations want to speak in today's debate.

With that in mind, I will be brief. Like others, we are committed to preventing, but also responding to, sexual violence in conflict. We launched the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative some years ago, which shows how central tackling sexual violence is to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Five years on from the global summit that launched that campaign, the United Kingdom plans to hold an international meeting in 2019 to maintain a global focus. We look forward to working very closely with everybody in the Chamber to achieve our common goals.

I agree with our Russian colleague that sexual violence is one of the violations of international humanitarian law that also applies to non-State actors, which I think is incredibly important. We adopted the General Assembly Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Group of Eight Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2013. I hope that, as work progresses in this area, we might be able to build on those two important documents.

If I may, I would like today to focus on three specific issues. The first issue is the importance of education, in particular for girls. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence in conflict, as we have heard from many speakers, including the Ambassadors of Kazakhstan and of Côte d'Ivoire. That is not to detract from the point that men and boys can also be victims, but it is women and girls who suffer most. Therefore, by extension, creating a global environment where gender equality and

women's rights exist and discriminatory attitudes, behaviours and practices do not will obviously help to achieve that goal.

The British Foreign Secretary has set a personal target for British diplomacy of helping other countries achieve 12 years of quality education for all girls. We are investing our development assistance in girls' education, as we know that it contributes to a safer and more prosperous world, reduces conflict and increases stability.

My second point regards survivor stigma, which the Polish representative very eloquently set out. I will therefore not repeat what has already been said, but just say that we completely agree with the focus that he attributed to this area. The United Kingdom's *Principles for Global Action: Preventing and Addressing Stigma Associated with Conflict-related Sexual Violence in Conflict* is a practical guide that we have drawn up to raise awareness among policymakers of the challenges concerning this issue. We truly hope that the principles can be applied in all contexts where sexual violence has occurred.

Finally, I will broach justice and accountability, which other speakers have also touched upon. The survivors of sexual violence and children born as a result of rape must receive justice for what has happened to them. That is a critical element of our prevention efforts. There has been some important progress — for example, at the Kavumu trial in the Democratic Republic of the Congo late last year, when 11 Congolese militia members were convicted of crimes against humanity for murder and rape against 37 young children. But there is much more to be done. Although Kosovo and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant are not mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/250), there continues to be a gap in justice and accountability for sexual violence cases from those conflicts.

In conclusion, we join others in urging all Member States to implement the international protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict. That provides guidance on achieving accountability for this truly abhorrent crime, which we must all pledge to tackle.