

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict
16th-17th December 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by H.E. Mr. Garen Nazarian, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations

Allow me to first express my thanks to you, Madame President, for convening this debate on a topic that, as the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, I am particularly glad to see addressed.

All the United Nations world conferences on women have recognized the interlinkage between gender equality, development and peace. In 1995, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Member States devoted a section of the Beijing Platform for Action to women and armed conflict, noting that women and girls were particularly affected by armed conflict because of their status in society and their sex. Member States also highlighted particular forms of violence against women in situations of armed conflict.

Fifteen years later, it is heartening to observe how much this issue has gained in visibility and traction. It is now taken up in various intergovernmental bodies, including the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission. Member States at the national level and civil society organizations are demonstrating their commitment to tackling this challenge through concrete action.

I welcome the presence and contribution of Ms. Margot Wallström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and her focus on addressing sexual violence in the context of the Secretary-General's campaign "Unite to End Violence against Women".

The Commission on the Status of Women, too, has contributed to advancing global policy on women, peace and security. At its forty-eighth session in 2004, the Commission considered women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding. In its agreed conclusions, the Commission recognized that women and girls were often subject to particular forms of violence and deprivation in armed conflict, and called for measures to prevent gender-based violence arising from armed conflict and in post-conflict situations, including sexual violence against women and girls. The agreed conclusions also urged Governments to prosecute the perpetrators of such crimes.

In 2008, the Commission evaluated progress in the implementation of the 2004 agreed conclusions through an interactive dialogue. Many participants reported on initiatives to address sexual violence in armed conflict and to increase the participation of women in peacekeeping and security forces. They also highlighted the need to strengthen efforts at the national and international levels to address sexual violence in armed conflict as a threat to peace and security.

This year, the Commission also considered the question of violence against women as part of its follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, and held an interactive dialogue on the subject. Expert panellists, member States, United Nations system entities and non-governmental organizations were able to share their experiences and the results achieved. Despite the measures that have been taken to prevent and address violence against women, reports by the participants made it clear that it persists.

Efforts to address violence against women are often not comprehensive, consistent or sustained, and there continues to be insufficient coordination among relevant sectors. Knowledge regarding the scope, prevalence, impact and cost of violence against women remains inadequate, and capacities for collecting such data are insufficient. Greater efforts are necessary to collect more and better-quality information and data on violence against women to support policymakers in undertaking effective legislative and policy reforms, ensure the adequate provision of targeted and effective services, monitor trends and progress in addressing and eliminating violence against women, and assess the impact of measures taken.

In this context, the Council's effort to set up a mechanism for monitoring and reporting sexual violence against women may prove to be very useful, not only to the Council's work but also to other organizations working on issues pertaining to sexual violence against women and gender issues in general. Such a plan should incorporate measurable goals and timetables, monitoring and accountability measures and provisions for impact assessments.

The Commission on the Status of Women plays a central role in monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action, including with respect to women in armed conflict. I recognize and welcome the key role and critical efforts of the Security Council in preventing sexual violence and combating impunity in conflict and post-conflict situations. I encourage continuing action by the Council, including the development of effective measures to put an end to sexual violence in armed conflict.