

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mr. Sajdik, Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations.

It is my great honour to address the Council today on behalf of the Human Security Network. Our cross-regional network consists of Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, South Africa as an observer, and my own country, Austria. Women's full enjoyment of all human rights remains at the core of our group's agenda.

Let me first thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka for their comprehensive statements.

The Human Security Network welcomes recent progress on the women and peace and security agenda, including the most recent resolutions 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013). The Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict issued in September 2013 was also an important landmark, and we look forward to these commitments being converted into concrete actions, including through the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which is to take place in June.

We are appreciative of the efforts of Special Representative Bangura and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/181). Conflict-related sexual violence is pervasive, although, as the report clearly states, it is almost universally underreported due to factors such as stigma, reprisals and the targeting of survivors and those who support them, including humanitarian workers, human rights defenders and journalists. We welcome the progress and commitments made by States and the work of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

However, our group is concerned about elements in the report indicating the systematic and widespread use of sexual violence as a tool of intimidation and social control. In addition, the report highlights the continued use of sexual violence as a means of displacing populations, as well as the pregnancies resulting from sexual violence and the plight of children born of rape, which requires much more attention. We call on all parties to cease such sexual violence-related violations and to hold perpetrators to account.

Ceasefire and peace agreements should contain provisions that stipulate conflict-related sexual violence as a prohibited act in the definition of a ceasefire, and amnesty provisions must not be applicable to crimes of sexual violence. Furthermore, parties to conflict have to provide remedy and assistance to victims and survivors of sexual violence, including health-care services. We also call upon the members of the Security Council to use all means at their disposal to address sexual violence in armed conflicts, including by making referrals to the International Criminal Court and other relevant actions.

We welcome the recommendations in the report, including those on steps that can be taken by the Security Council to reinforce and implement the prevention framework outlined in resolution 2106 (2013). Let me also highlight that women's empowerment and participation are essential to any prevention and protection response.

Regarding our own behaviour as an organization, we encourage the Secretary-General and all other relevant actors to ensure the full implementation of the zero-tolerance policy against any kind of sexual exploitation or abuse. According to the report contained in document A/68/756, concerning allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations system, despite a slight increase in 2013 there has been a general downward trend in the number of allegations of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse received in recent years. Nonetheless, one substantiated case is one case too many and is unacceptable.

Strengthening civil society, including grass-roots women's organizations and networks that provide assistance to victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflict, can enable the restoration of dignity and respect and

provide the necessary skills, treatment and care to empower individuals to protect themselves and defend their rights.

To conclude, I should like to reiterate our group's commitment to promoting and enhancing the role of women in peace processes. The importance of women's participation in decision-making in conflict resolution processes cannot be overstated. We also remain strong supporters of women protection advisers within the United Nations peacekeeping and political missions, and believe that their positions should be financed from within mission budgets. We must all strive towards enabling stronger protection for women and girls in conflict situations while simultaneously addressing the drivers of sexual violence before it occurs, and the Human Security Network will continue to contribute to this shared goal.