

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Ms. Frankinet, Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations.

My delegation first would like to thank Nigeria for convening this debate and for providing Belgium with an opportunity to take part in it. Combating sexual violence in conflict is indeed a priority for Belgium. My country would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181) and Ms. Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her unfailing commitment to the cause.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I would therefore like to focus my statement on some points that are of particular importance for Belgium.

First and foremost, combating impunity is a priority for my country. Security Council resolution 2106 (2013), adopted last year, called for the pursuit of efforts in combating the impunity of perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. Belgium is particularly concerned about sexual violence committed by members of the police, the army and some armed groups, in particular in Afghanistan and in Côte d'Ivoire. The climate of impunity, characterized by a lack of disciplinary procedures, sanctions and criminal prosecution, significantly contributes to creating a high-risk environment for women and girls.

Belgium would also like to underscore the importance of ensuring access to effective justice for victims of sexual violence. My country is seriously concerned by the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is one of the three target countries of the national Belgian action plan called "Women, peace and security". There is a great gulf between the legislative framework and implementing that framework. Numerous victims have limited access to justice, in particular because of a lack of resources to file a law suit and to get legal aid. Developing appropriate mechanisms to assist victims and to facilitate access to justice is crucial. Implementing a functioning judicial system is also needed in the Central African Republic, where the victims of sexual violence are very vulnerable to being stigmatized and to reprisals.

Furthermore, Belgium shares the Secretary-General's concerns regarding the link between sexual violence and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatant programmes and security sector reform (SSR) programmes. There is a real need to pay particular and additional attention to the gender dimension when planning, training for and developing DDR and SSR programmes.

Belgium would also like to state its concerns about the impact of conflicts on the rights of the child, in particular regarding forced marriages, prostitution and the exploitation of girls. The presence of armed groups increases the rate of forced and early marriages in a number of countries — for example, Syria and Yemen — where conflict has had devastating consequences for the poorest and most vulnerable girls. Belgium would like to underscore, as the Secretary-General did, that the end of a conflict does not mean an end of sexual violence. Post-conflict situations create high-risk environments. That must be borne in mind in order to have a comprehensive, consistent approach to combating sexual violence. Along those lines, Belgium supports the Secretary-General's recommendation regarding including the prevention of sexual violence in all peace and cease-fire agreements. Furthermore, as an ardent champion of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, Belgium pays particular importance to the participation of women in all stages of the peace process. Women must have the possibility to decide their own fate and to contribute to preventing and resolving conflicts as well as to building peace.