

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Ms. Frankinet, Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations.*

I thank Rwanda for having organized this extremely important Security Council debate. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149). And I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for her very timely and informative statement. Belgium fully supports the Special Representative's mandate and the six points of her agenda of priorities.

My country has always been a strong advocate of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and will, of course, remain so. In his report, the Secretary-General clearly highlights how sexual violence persists in many societies as a common practice that is often invisible and too rarely prosecuted.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore limit my remarks to a few comments on the report of the Secretary-General.

First, my delegation stresses the need to ensure that the countries concerned themselves take ownership of and lead the fight against sexual violence. National courts must, in our view, remain the main place where people are charged with sexual-violence crimes. We should of course support those courts in pursuing the fight against impunity. Concerning crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, international criminal justice mechanisms are an important complement to national efforts. In that context, we believe it is appropriate to apply the definition of sexual violence in the broadest sense laid out in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Secondly, my delegation is convinced that we must focus on prevention in the fight against all forms of sexual violence. That is one of the key conclusions of the most recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the main theme of which was the struggle against all forms of violence against women and girls.

Thirdly, I would like to thank the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for its determined and courageous work. Belgium supports its efforts to strengthen the capacity of national actors.

Fourthly, the situations in the countries mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General are particularly worrying. I would highlight the seriousness of the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and the Syrian Arab Republic, among others. In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sexual violence against women is used systematically as a weapon of war. Belgium attaches absolute priority to the fight against violence against women, both by supporting those who are doing their utmost to help victims and survivors, but also by ramping up diplomatic efforts to find a lasting solution to the crisis.

We welcome the information provided this morning by Ms. Bangura on the agreement reached with the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to strengthen efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict in that country, and our hope is that the agreement will be speedily implemented.

Fifthly, my delegation particularly supports certain recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. On the one hand, it is necessary to increase pressure on the perpetrators of sexual violence related to conflict by adopting targeted measures against them via the various Sanctions Committees. On the other hand, we must make every effort to ensure that victims and survivors

have access to all of the necessary multisectoral services and that compensation systems are set up and all means sought to effectively fight against sexual violence in conflict.

Lastly, we are strongly in favour of the mainstreaming of the fight against sexual violence in the various areas of action of the United Nations. By way of example, we welcome the fact that the text of the Arms Trade Treaty that was recently adopted includes clear references to the need to take into account the risks of violence against women and girls.