

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mrs. Andelic, Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations.

Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka for their statements.

We take note of the report (S/2014/181) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, submitted to the Security Council for the information of its members, as well as the analysis and recommendations contained therein.

We recognize and welcome the fact that this year the Security Council will be more focused on consolidation efforts aimed at the implementation of its resolutions 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013). That will be a genuine contribution to the global commitment to end sexual violence in conflict. We are fully committed to addressing all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict. The protection of women in conflict situations and ending impunity remain our utmost priorities.

In our efforts to end impunity we acknowledge the active advocacy efforts of the United Nations, inter alia with Governments, in addressing sexual violence in armed conflict, particularly of the mandates of the Secretary-General's Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We shall continue to cooperate closely with them in the future as well.

We are also committed to the provisions of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Eight in London on 11 April 2013.

We believe that the prosecution of sexual violence crimes, as well as national ownership and responsibility in addressing the root causes of sexual violence in armed conflict, are central to the prevention of such acts in the future. Sexual violence in armed conflict cannot be accepted as a cultural phenomenon. It is not an inevitable consequence of war or a lesser crime. Therefore, we advocate the importance of the victim's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict settings.

In that context, we want to underline the importance of rulings of the international tribunals — the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda — which defined sexual violence as an instrument of warfare and rape as a crime against humanity. In the *Akayesu* case, sexual violence was recognized as an element of genocide. The impact of those two rulings was that hundreds of victims got the courage to testify against perpetrators throughout the world.

Women's political, social and economic empowerment, gender equality and the mobilization of men and boys in an effort to combat all forms of violence against women are essential in long-term efforts to prevent sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. Therefore, we fully support the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. As a member of the Executive Board, we shall continue to support all the efforts of UN-Women in this area as well.

We are aware that States bear the primary responsibility to respect and ensure the human rights of all individuals within their territory. Addressing the injustices of sexual violence in armed conflict is critical on two levels. First, it provides support to persons who are survivors of such atrocities; and, secondly, it furthers the transformation from a State affected by violence to one of lasting peace.

Sexual violence is a form of psychosocial torture where the suffering of the victims extends to their families, and through families reflects the entire society, while the suffering does not cease after the act of violence is committed. The victims very often have to fight the outside factor — the stigma of society where the victim is blamed and penalized but the perpetrator is free to have a normal life. That is why we strongly believe that

an effective national strategy to end sexual violence must include programmes to challenge the existing culture of impunity for these crimes. It must emphasize the role of all, men and women, as active contributors to change.

We have a track record of definitive action in implementing resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. We were the first country in South-East Europe to develop a comprehensive national action plan for its implementation.

For example, our national action plan mandates that the topics of gender equality and the prohibition of sexual harassment, gender-based violence and discrimination be incorporated into curriculums of policy academies. It requires that a zero-tolerance approach be applied to any form of illicit sexual behaviour of peacekeeping mission personnel. And it calls for the creation and improvement of programmes to provide psychosocial support and economic empowerment to women who are survivors of trafficking or sexual violence.

With the aim of improving the overall situation of women victims of rape, we are making efforts to finalize the process of developing our second action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) for the period 2014-2017, which contains important provisions for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. We are also working on a programme for improving the status of women victims of wartime rape, sexual violence and other forms of torture for the period 2013-2016.

Involving women in conflict prevention and mediation and the deployment of women's protection advisers to United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions is crucial to building and reinforcing peace. We have been working on additional efforts to advance this issue and have adopted a policy that one third of nominated candidates for peacekeeping missions must be women.

This year, Bosnia and Herzegovina presented a candidate for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). If elected, our candidate will place her priority on prevention and raising awareness of these most important issues. She will continue fighting against prejudice and impunity. My country attaches great significance to this candidature and thus hopes to advance the CEDAW agenda.

With regard to the provisions of the report of the Secretary-General and to the visit of Special Representative Zainab Bangura to Bosnia and Herzegovina in June 2013, our authorities provided comments and additional remarks to the Office of the Special Representative.

Finally, I should like to point out that the international community must permanently work on strengthening United Nations efforts to address sexual violence in armed conflict. Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to contribute to those efforts.

In addition, I should like to inform the Council that Bosnia and Herzegovina aligns itself with the statement delivered today by the delegation of the European Union.