

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Resolution 1820
Thursday, June 19, 2008

Statement by H.E Mrs. Viotta, Representative of Brazil to the United Nations

I commend the United States presidency on the initiative of convening this open thematic debate on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and express appreciation to Ms. Rice for her participation and leadership.

This debate is rather timely, as we are witnessing an increase in the reporting of cases of violence against women around the globe. In the case of armed conflicts, the shocking images broadcast by the media are deeply disturbing and attest to the gravity of the problem. It is simply despicable. Rape and all other forms of sexual abuse must be vehemently condemned, no matter their purpose, and perpetrators punished.

Our collective consternation and indignation must lead to action. If we are to successfully face this most daunting challenge, we need to design and implement practical, concrete measures to adequately address the issue, with the involvement of the international community as a whole.

Current international instruments provide an adequate framework and the necessary basis for such work. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols are all important references in the effort we need to undertake. Also relevant are the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and pertinent instruments of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) must play a central role in such a strategy. It should be carried out in conjunction with that of all General Assembly resolutions on violence against women, the Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as the 1974 General Assembly Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, in accordance with which all forms of repression and cruel and inhuman treatment of women and children committed by belligerents in the course of military operations or in occupied territories shall be considered criminal.

Our common efforts on the ground can also benefit from the accumulated knowledge, experience and expertise of the United Nations system, in particular the relevant agencies, programmes and funds of the Organization. They are invaluable partners in a strategy to combat violence against women in armed conflicts.

Ending impunity must also be part of our collective efforts. No woman or girl victim of sexual violence can reconstruct her life unless the cycle of recurrence is broken. Beyond a lack of respect for the human being, impunity signals the continuation of a horrendous crime, which has multiplying negative effects on family members and the community as a whole.

For that reason, we must strengthen the crucial role played by the International Criminal Court in ensuring accountability and punishing perpetrators of rape and other forms of gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence, all considered crimes against humanity, as defined in the Rome Statute.

An effective response to violence against women requires a comprehensive approach in which peace and security concerns are integrated into a human-rights- based perspective. In that regard, empowering women and girls must be at the centre of any effort to address gender-based violence. The overall situation of women and girls will improve only if equal participation in decision-making at all levels is ensured.

In the specific case of armed conflicts, the full- fledged participation of women in peacebuilding efforts is critical. In this respect, more interaction is necessary between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, under Article 65 of the Charter. We should also make full use of the possibilities of cooperation within the Peacebuilding Commission, which can contribute to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). As we see in the country-specific case of Guinea-Bissau, peacebuilding can greatly benefit from women's perspectives and actions.

In the Americas, Brazil is involved in an initiative of South-South cooperation carried out within the scope of the Brazilian contribution to the consolidation of peace in Haiti. This initiative, based on our domestic experience, supports the implementation of the Haitian national plan to prevent violence against women and to address the needs of women victims of sexual violence. It is developed through the exchange of experts and good practices, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund and OXFAM.

In concluding, I reiterate Brazil's political and practical commitment to international efforts designed to end all forms of violence against women. My delegation hopes that the Council's adoption of the draft resolution, "Women and peace and security: sexual violence in situations of armed conflict", will help us to attain that goal.