

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict
16th-17th December 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ms. Viotti, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations

I would like to express our appreciation to you, Madam President, for convening this debate on such an important issue.

I also thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and for his comprehensive and candid report on sexual violence in armed conflict (S/2010/604).

We are grateful to Special Representative Ms. Margot Wallström for her presentation and for her work. Our appreciation also goes to Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy and Military Adviser Lieutenant General Babacar Gaye for their statements.

When the Council takes up issues such as sexual violence, the challenge is how to address in political, and even operational, terms an issue that is deeply moral in nature. In other words, the Council is called upon to help to translate our sorrow and outrage at such horrific violence into practical action capable of bringing about real change. To that end, we need an integrated approach that combines prevention, combating impunity and providing support to victims.

Support to national awareness-raising activities and information campaigns that seek to break taboos and misperceptions around the issue are particularly important to preventive efforts. For example, as the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/604) highlights, the myth that rape is an inevitable by-product of war is persistent and dangerously self-fulfilling. The stigma and silence that already hamper addressing sexual violence in peacetime can never be allowed to prevail, especially when such violence becomes a tactic of war.

In situations where peacekeeping operations are deployed, the United Nations role in prevention becomes one of particular relevance, as the enhanced resources at its disposal create higher expectations among local populations and in international public opinion. In order to live up to such expectations, we must ensure that the prevention of sexual violence is truly made a mission-wide endeavour that involves not only troops and police but all mission components.

Recent events have shown that contacts with local populations are critical to ensuring protection. The role of civil affairs and public information components is therefore key. They should have the necessary resources — especially guidance and trained personnel — to be able to help avoid outrageous violence such as that witnessed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are encouraged by the measures being taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to mainstream the prevention of sexual violence in peacekeeping missions.

Impunity tends to fuel violence. Brazil appreciates and supports the work of Ms. Wallström's Office to support national institutions in identifying and prosecuting perpetrators. We also believe that the Team of Experts established by resolution 1888 (2009) can play an important role in helping States to strengthen the rule of law in situations of particular concern. The role of the International Criminal Court becomes key when national jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to exercise their primary responsibility.

The adoption of resolution 1960 (2010) today, which Brazil is pleased to have co-sponsored, sends a clear message that the Council is ready to continue to fight impunity by focusing on parties that engage in conflict-related sexual violence. It has strengthened the tools and arrangements available to the Council and to the United Nations as a whole. It is a significant and concrete step towards ensuring accountability, thus contributing to a decrease in the incidence of the problem.

As we focus on bringing perpetrators to justice or to face opprobrium, we cannot shirk our duty to ensure proper support to victims. While this is fundamentally the responsibility of States, there are several ways by which the international community can support national efforts in that regard. Brazil recently contributed \$1 million to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in support of programmes to fight sexual violence and facilitate victims' access to justice and compensation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Dealing with sexual violence requires different parts of the United Nations system to act on many fronts. Today we have made progress in that direction and concluded, on a very high note, a remarkable effort that we began this year to provide an effective response by the Security Council to the scourge of sexual violence. There is certainly more to be done, but we now have the tools and a clear road map to make further progress in the future.