



MYANMAR

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Statement by

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Permanent Mission of the Union of Myanmar to

the United Nations

at the Open Debate

on

Women and Peace and Security

at

the United Nations Security Council

New York, 19 June 2008

Madam President,

May I thank you for the opportunity to take part in today's open debate. The issues of peace and security as well as women are issues of signal importance for my country.

The need to prevent armed conflict and to bring to a speedy conclusion in situations of armed conflict cannot be overemphasized. The Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) calls for all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from rape and other forms of sexual abuses and to end impunity whenever this dastardly crime is perpetrated. In situation of armed conflict, the most vulnerable among the population include women and girls. Therefore, we firmly believe that tackling the root causes of conflict which include disunity, poverty, socio-economic and gender inequality and underdevelopment are extremely important.

Myanmar fully supports the zero tolerance policy with regard to violence against women and girls. Myanmar tradition, culture and value strongly favour our efforts to promote gender equality. They also contribute strongly to the Government's endeavours to protect women and girls from gender based violence including sexual exploitation and abuses. The Government in order to promote and protect the rights of women and girls established Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs (MNCWA) in 1996 as a national machinery to carry out Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. In 2003, in order to comprehensively carry out the measures laid down by MNCWA, Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAF) was formed. One of the key areas actively carried out by MNCWA and MWAF is violence against women.

My delegation has repeatedly stressed here that the best way to protect civilians, particularly women and children in armed conflict, is to put a speedy end to such conflict. We also believe that national reconciliation is the only way to end conflict in a speedy manner. My country experienced, at first hand, the devastating effect of insurgency that raged for over (40) years, soon after the independence. It is only recently that owing to the national reconciliation policy of my Government, we have emerged from a conflict situation and are able to put to a virtual end the insurgencies that had ravaged the country for so long. Currently 17 out of 18 major insurgent groups have come back to the legal fold. With regard to the remaining KNU insurgent group, its two main factions have opted for peace, leaving only a small remnant of the KNU and former narco-trafficking armed groups outside the legal fold.

Peace and stability now prevails in almost all corners of Myanmar. It has resulted in significant improvement in the daily life of civilians, in particular women and children.

Madam President,

My delegation joins in the international community in its condemnation, in its strongest terms, of all sexual and other forms of violence committed against civilians in armed conflict particularly women and children. We must work together to prevent this. Here, I wish to stress the importance of avoiding politicization of this important issue. Sexual violence as a weapon of war must be strongly condemned. In the same vein, fabricating allegations and using disinformation as a weapon of political pressure warrant strong condemnation.

My delegation therefore takes exception to the unfounded allegations regarding sexual violence leveled against Myanmar armed forces. We categorically reject them. The allegations leveled at the Myanmar Military come from groups associated with the insurgents. Failing in their attempt to topple the Government by force of arms, they have embarked upon a disinformation campaign by fabricating allegations. The Security Council has had first hand experience that reports emanating from exiles are at variance with reality. Rape, let alone gang rape, is regarded by Myanmar people and Government as a most dastardly and abhorrent crime. Whenever such a crime is committed, we make sure that the full force of law is applied against perpetrators. Whenever there are allegations, investigations are carried out by authorities and organizations concerned, including the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation and where there were genuine cases, perpetrators were prosecuted and given sentences ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment.

Madam President,

Rape or any forms of sexual violence is unlawful in any circumstance in all places. It is also an offense against the dignity and integrity of the victims. The international community, national governments, and the UN system must all work together so that all parties to armed conflict heed the call to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender based violence particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

I thank you.