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**STATEMENT BY
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DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL
OPEN DEBATE ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

NEW YORK, 19 JUNE 2008

**DÉCLARATION DE
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AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES**

**AU DÉBAT OUVERT DU CONSEIL DE SÉCURITÉ
SUR LA VIOLENCE SEXUELLE**

NEW YORK, LE 19 JUIN 2008

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I wish to thank the United States for convening this open debate on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. It is important that this open debate marks the beginning of a more concentrated effort on the part of the Council to combat and prevent sexual violence. Sexual violence, especially against women and girls, continues at alarming levels in many conflict and postconflict situations. All too frequently, sexual violence is used as a deliberate weapon of war. It is time that all involved in the maintenance of peace and security step up to address this issue within their respective domains.

Sexual and other forms of violence against civilians in conflict-affected situations can, in many circumstances, constitute a threat to international peace and security. It is more than clear in Sudan, the DRC and the Great Lakes Region, for example, that sexual violence is a security problem requiring a security response. As such, it is imperative that the issue be addressed by the Security Council. Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, adopted in 2000, calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and emphasizes the need to end impunity for war crimes, including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls. Eight years later, we have made progress in implementing these commitments but significant challenges remain.

As we call for further concerted action to eliminate sexual violence, let us reaffirm our commitment to the equal participation and full involvement of women in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, including in peace processes, and remind ourselves of the need to take concrete measures to increase their role in decision-making with respect to conflict prevention and resolution.

Canada was pleased to co-sponsor a conference held two weeks ago at Wilton Park to examine the role for military peacekeepers in addressing sexual violence, with the participation of a mix of practitioners and policy-makers with military, police, civilian and diplomatic backgrounds. Among the conclusions that emerged very clearly were that peacekeeping missions need clear and strong mandates from the Security Council; that doctrine must be developed to provide guidance to the missions; and that the Council's monitoring of sexual violence and efforts to address it must become more systematic.

We are encouraged by the progress made under Security Council resolution 1612 on Children and Armed Conflict with reference to rape and other sexual violations against girls in conflict. The Secretary General has issued recommendations in recent reports on the Protection of Civilians and on Children and Armed Conflict which will help strengthen the Council's work when addressing sexual violence. Canada supports the Secretary General's proposals on expanding the protection framework specific to children to include sexual violence.

At the same time, Security Council resolution 1325 requires systematic implementation and monitoring if we are to respond adequately to conflicts. Last October, Canada called on the Security Council to establish a mechanism to monitor its own actions in the integration of resolution 1325 into its daily work. Canada again calls on the Council to establish such a monitoring mechanism with a mandate to regularly and actively monitor progress in 1325 implementation in the Council's work.

Systematic data collection on grave violations of women's and girls' human rights is of utmost importance to effective monitoring. Canada reiterates its recommendation that violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, be systematically included in all reports of the Secretary-General to the Council. Through rigorous data collection and monitoring, the Council would increase its capacity to develop effective peace support mandates that better address this violence, including by way of prevention in the first instance.

Canada welcomes the most recent renewal of the peacekeeping mandate of the UN Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) in Security Council resolution 1794, which provides the mission with a more explicit mandate for action to eliminate sexual violence. It should serve as the basis for future mandates by the Council. Unfortunately, the notable absence of equally strong provisions regarding sexual violence in Security Council resolutions 1795 on Côte d'Ivoire and 1812 on Sudan, both adopted after 1794, demonstrated that inconsistency in the Council's approach to sexual violence in mission mandates continues.

Canada strongly believes that a report by the Secretary General to the Council which includes recommendations to improve the UN's response, both within the Security Council and beyond, to eliminate sexual violence in conflict situations, would be valuable. The report should draw on the full breadth of expertise including from UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and relevant non-governmental organizations and women's groups at the local and global levels. An independent expert could be appointed to lead this study.

Impunity for sexual violence against women and girls, men and boys is rampant in conflict-affected situations. International criminal tribunals play an important role in ensuring accountability for serious crimes including sexual violence. The International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment and recent arrest of Jean-Pierre Bemba for massive sexual crimes allegedly committed in the Central African Republic is just one example of international efforts to end impunity for sexual crimes. In addition to the ICC, the cases at the Special Court for Sierra Leone have included charges and convictions for crimes of sexual violence. Canada calls on States to cooperate in the four conflict and post-conflict situations in which the International Criminal Court is active: the region of Darfur in Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, to ensure perpetrators of serious international crimes are held responsible. The rule of law, justice and accountability are essential to durable peace.

To that end, Canada as co-chair of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region urges the early domestication of the binding Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children, adopted under the December 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region. This protocol demands that the region guarantee that sexual violence shall be punishable in times of peace and in situations of armed conflict.

Canada remains committed to actively supporting the Security Council in its efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict-affected situations, including country-specific initiatives, and encourages the development of doctrine to address and prevent sexual violence. Action is desperately required to put an end to such heinous acts of violence. The Security Council must demonstrate its resolute commitment to defending and maintaining international peace and security by stepping up and taking action against sexual violence. It should now be abundantly clear to all: The systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war demands an effective, timely and proportionate response by the Security Council.