

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Ms. Espinosa, Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations.

I would like to highlight the importance of the issue before us - sexual violence - which particularly affects women in conflict situations and is an issue that gravely affects human rights. In that respect, this debate should directly involve the General Assembly. It is also necessary to stress the importance of combating the root causes of war and conflict, namely, the influence of the arms trade and violent actions by the powerful.

The current world conflict scenario has become even more complicated due to economic dynamics. Countries in crisis view the arms trade and war as ways to strengthen their economy. But truly nothing will undermine human rights and women's rights more than strengthening the economy through the arms industry. The total world military expenditure in 2013 was \$1.747 billion. The 15 countries with the highest military expenditure together represent four-fifths of all military spending in the world.

Moreover, it is a paradox of our time that, although the growing technological sophistication has not resolved the basic problems of a large part of the world population in achieving sustainable development, it has provided weapons of mass destruction. And there is still no end to poverty and inequality.

Ecuador is convinced that, to deal with the fundamental causes of conflict and violence, genuine commitment is needed to curb the current arms race and new forms of war and conflict, such as so-called preventive war, cyber espionage and the involvement of outside actors in fomenting conflict within countries in support or defence of their own interests.

It must be acknowledged that armed conflict and violence are often generated by inequality among States that themselves have been generally affected by an unjust international economic system, various forms of social exclusion, religious intolerance and ethnic and gender discrimination. In that regard, we must call upon States to avoid wars of aggression and the use of force based on alleged threats out of respect for the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples. With those considerations, we do not see that the problems of sexual violence in conflict have diminished, due to the persistence of a social permissiveness with respect to violence against women and girls, which, unfortunately, in many areas of society, has come to seem almost natural.

Sexual violence is a violation of fundamental human rights and, in particular, the human rights of women. International humanitarian law and international criminal law are dedicated to protecting women from sexual violence. However, we do not see the indices of violence against women diminishing this year. As we have said before, it is the responsibility of all States to put an end not only to that form of violence, but also to impunity for war crimes, including war crimes related to sexual violence, for example, such horrors as forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization and other types of sexual violence.

In the case of Ecuador, our armed forces are considered to be an institution that protect the rights, freedoms and guarantees of all our citizens — men and women. We therefore look at defence as a public good that integrates human rights, international humanitarian law, gender equity and multiculturalism in a cross-cutting manner. This takes concrete form in the implementation of our gender policy in the Ecuadorian Armed Forces, which has been in force since March 2013. The gender policy fosters a change in the cultural patterns that cause gender-based violence, through which related subjects are incorporated into training for all military personnel and the promotion of educational programmes designed to prevent sexual violence that are tailored specifically for the training of troops. The policy has also brought improvements to military infrastructure so that adequate conditions are in place for military personnel, female and male alike.

We must also say that in some regions of the world we continue to undertake peaceful means of conflict resolution, building a culture of peace and new forms of coexistence, as well as a clear position for achieving global disarmament. As members of the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, we are contributing to the creation of a true region of peace. But those

efforts undertaken at the national or regional levels can be strengthened only by the effective actions of international bodies such as the International Criminal Court, which brings the timely prosecution of crimes against humanity, especially those related to discrimination and violence against women.

Lastly, Ecuador again insists upon the need to come up with multilateral and global strategies that fight the underlying causes of war and conflict and bring to light warmongering policies, adopting measures that bring an end to them and subjecting them to international law. We remain committed to building a true culture of peace through social justice, the fight against impunity, dignity and equality of women and the good living of our peoples.