

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, as well as Ms. Rhoda Misaka, who spoke on behalf of civil society, for their statements.

Conflict-related violence continues to claim lives and lead to serious and irreparable consequences for its survivors, their communities and their families, including children born of rape. That is clearly reflected in the alarming information in the latest report submitted by the Secretary-General (S/2014/181). We therefore call on the Security Council and all stakeholders to continue to focus on measures aimed at preventing sexual violence, protecting and assisting its survivors, bringing its perpetrators to justice and ensuring that women and women's organizations participate in all our efforts to foster peace and security.

We welcome the steps taken towards a consolidated approach to conflict-related sexual violence and, more broadly, to the issue of women and peace and security, as well as the progress made in moving from the principles and goals established to creating operational measures and tools. We must live up to our political commitment through concrete and measurable action. In that regard, we strongly agree on the need for all of us to assume national ownership, leadership and responsibility.

We commend the work of the Special Representative and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and welcome the Secretary-General's report. The European Union agrees that more work on a comprehensive, multisectoral and multidimensional approach to preventing conflict-related sexual violence should be done. In that regard, we would like to particularly emphasize the following issues.

Reporting, monitoring and information-sharing should be based on intensifying the establishment and use of monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements in the context of country-specific resolutions and mandates. It also depends on increasing the deployment of women protection advisers in the relevant peacekeeping missions. We also note the importance of continued and enhanced information-sharing, including through briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and by the Executive Director of UN-Women, when the Council is discussing mandate renewals and country situations.

Concerning access to justice and accountability, crimes of sexual violence must be prosecuted and punished under national and international law. In that regard, we emphasize the significant advances made in international law by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the non-permanent international criminal tribunals relating to combating sexual violence in conflict, as well as national efforts to implement the Statute. We also support targeted and graduated measures by the relevant Security Council Sanctions Committees aimed at perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. In that regard, we note the resolution renewing the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (resolution 2134 (2014)), which includes sexual violence as part of the designation criteria for targeted sanctions.

In South Sudan, we are very concerned about the recent reports from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan of targeted killings of civilians based on their ethnic origins and hate messages calling for sexual violence against people on the basis of the community they belong to. We are also concerned about women's

participation in conflict prevention, resolution, protection and peacebuilding processes. None of our actions will be effective unless they are backed by the expertise, support and ownership of women and women's organizations, as well as that of civil society and community leaders.

The European Union continues to implement its dedicated policy on women, peace and security, including through close cooperation with other international and regional organizations. In that regard, we welcome the designation of Ms. Bineta Diop as the African Union Commission Chairperson's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. Among the EU's support for efforts to address sexual violence is a project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that focuses on empowering women, combating impunity and reforming the security sector. The EU is continuing its work on specific training modules on human rights and gender in crisis management, helping to focus on sexual violence in armed conflicts and on training for trainers on gender and human-rights issues.

We welcome the provisions related to gender-based violence and violence against women and children in the Arms Trade Treaty, which has been signed by all European Union member States and already ratified by a majority of them. We also welcome the endorsement by 144 States of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, proclaimed last September in New York, to be followed up in June at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

We must stay focused on combating sexual violence. I can assure the Council that the European Union will do its part to contribute to that goal.