

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security (Sexual Violence)
23rd of February 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ambassador Berger, Permanent Mission of Germany, to the United Nations

Mr. President, I would like to thank Togo as the Presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's open debate on this important issue. My thanks also go to the Secretary General, the Special Representative Margot Wallström and Ms Amina Megheirbi and USG Ladsous for their insightful briefings and statements.

The issue on our agenda today is one of the most abhorrent, yet still all too often concealed and under-reported crimes. In a number of armed conflicts sexual violence is used as a "weapon of war", thus not only destroying its victims but traumatizing societies at large. Widespread and systematic sexual violence ranks among the grave breaches of international law, as reflected in the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the 1949 Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocols.

This Council has recognized the threat of conflict-related sexual violence to peace and security. Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960 have been historic responses to a heinous reality. However, the disturbing situation on the ground, reflected in the recent report of the Secretary General and in today's briefings, underlines the strong imperative to "keep up the fight".

Germany very much welcomes the setting up of the new Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and commends SRSG Wallström and all UN and civil society organizations working on this issue, for their indispensable work. We hope that the Women Protection Advisors will be deployed shortly. Prevention is an important aspect of the SRSG's mandate, the Security Council needs to be properly informed about all possible threats to peace and security.

What more can the Security Council, UN organizations and Member States do?

First, our key goal should be prevention and not mere reaction. To facilitate such an approach, exact and reliable data and early-warning mechanisms, as mentioned in the Secretary General's report, are crucial. Awareness-raising and training, especially for peace-keepers and police-officers should also be high on our agenda. Whenever a peacekeeping mandate is renewed, this Council needs to make sure that it also contains provisions to monitor sexual violence.

Another aspect often overlooked when discussing prevention of violence, but mentioned today by the SRSG, are small arms: There is some evidence that, especially after an armed conflict, the ready availability of small arms increases the threat of their use especially against women and children.

Secondly, we must accelerate our fight against impunity. Perpetrators have to be brought to justice. Bearing in mind the main responsibility of States to investigate and prosecute, the Security Council also has a role to play. We therefore welcome the inclusion in the Secretary General's report, for the first time, of an annex listing parties which are credibly suspected of patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the Council's agenda. Naming and shaming is not an end in itself but should serve as a basis for targeted measures leading to an end of these terrible crimes. The ICC and international monitoring mechanisms have also done important work in this regard and should be further strengthened.

Thirdly, we need greater resolve on ensuring the participation of women in all stages of peace processes. To take an example: the issue of sexual violence has not yet figured in most ceasefire or peace agreements. To start closing this gap an interesting new tool has been developed by DPA: New mediation guidelines, which take into account the issue of sexual violence. These guidelines, which of course cover other aspects as well, will be presented on 9 March in the German Mission. It is my pleasure to invite you all to attend this event.

Fourthly, reparation schemes and funding frameworks should be guided by a survivor-focused approach. Both, physical and mental scars have to be treated in order to allow survivors to once again actively participate in their societies. We commend the valuable work done by UN organizations, especially the Trust Fund Against Violence Against Women, which Germany actively supports, as well as the newly created Team of Experts which advises Member States, upon their request, to combat sexual violence in or after conflict.

Let me finish by stressing that we cannot separate the challenge of sexual violence from the broader security issues on the agenda of this Council. We need the SRSG to continue her important work and Germany will actively support her in her endeavor. Thank you, Mr. President