

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Wittig, Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to thank Rwanda for organizing today's very important open debate. My thanks also go to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their insightful briefings.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of European Union, as well as the statement by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Although the Security Council has clearly stipulated in the relevant resolutions that sexual violence in conflict is a serious threat to peace and security, it remains a neglected and under-reported crime. The recent annual report of the Secretary General (S/2013/149) has brought to light some very disturbing findings. It shows that sexual violence is used in many conflicts as a weapon of war by armed groups and, in some cases, even by the armed forces. More than 30 parties from five countries are credibly suspected of committing or condoning sexual violence in conflict. And those are only parties in countries on the Council's agenda and on which the United Nations had verified information; the actual figures are undoubtedly much higher. Especially alarming is the fact that many of the victims are children. Therefore, the ultimate goal of our discussion here today must be to find new and better ways to address that abhorrent crime.

The report before us contains some very good recommendations in that regard. Let me mention four points of particular importance to us.

First, we welcome the work of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and hope it will continue to work closely with other United Nations mechanisms to guarantee the best possible concerted actions in the fight against sexual violence. We also welcome the dedicated work of Special Representative Bangura and the fact that she was able to brief the Council several times in the past months, including on the situations in Syria and the Central African Republic. However, the Council should make more use of the information received and do more to act and hold perpetrators accountable. It could, for example, release corresponding press statements, write specific letters to the Governments concerned and more often refer specific cases to the Sanctions Committees and, as a last resort, to the International Criminal Court.

Secondly, the Council should keep the issue of women and peace and security, including sexual violence, high on its agenda and make sure that all the relevant reports, mandate renewals and country visits by the Council contain specific provisions in that regard. More women's protection advisers need to be deployed, including in United Nations assessment teams and missions.

Thirdly, in security sector reform and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, more focus should be given to the needs of women and girls, not only as victims but also with a view to their active participation in reintegration processes. In peace agreements, sexual violence shall figure in one important provision: those who have previously committed or condoned sexual violence should be excluded from amnesty provisions and should not be allowed to serve in the relevant official functions.

Fourthly, Member States and regional organizations can also do more. Sexual violence shall under no circumstances be socially accepted. It is of paramount importance to criminalize sexual violence by law, hold perpetrators accountable and provide assistance services and reparations for survivors. In

that regard, we welcome the recent press statement by the African Union Peace and Security Council and its call for the development of new strategies to fight sexual violence in conflict. Also, we are confident that the recent commitments made in the Group of Eight context to address impunity for sexual violence in conflict will have a significant impact.

For my Government, confronting sexual violence is one of the priority areas in our new national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We actively support the United Nations, Member States and civil society in their fight against sexual violence. Personnel of non-governmental organizations, human rights defenders and journalists who report about cases of sexual violence, in particular, are often at a heightened risk of being targeted themselves. They all need our support to continue their invaluable work in raising awareness and helping Governments prevent or ease the consequences of sexual violence.

Let me conclude by saying that the Council should remain seized of this important issue. It should not and cannot be separated from the broader security issues.