

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement* by Mr. Rishchynski, Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

First, let me say a few words on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, an informal network of more than 40 interested States Members of the United Nations that is chaired by Canada.

The 45 members of the Group of Friends, which represent all five regional groups at the United Nations, reaffirm their support, in the strongest terms, for the work of the Security Council aimed at preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. The Group of Friends welcomes the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) on this issue and calls on the Security Council and the United Nations system to act systematically and comprehensively to address gaps and challenges to, and accelerate progress in, its work on women, peace and security, and to monitor commitments by parties to conflict to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. We further urge the Security Council to ensure that its mandated missions consistently evaluate the level of protection and promotion of women's human rights.

The Group of Friends welcomes the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and strongly supports her efforts aimed at preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence, while underlining women's empowerment and equal participation as prerequisites for tackling the underlying causes of sexual violence in conflict. The Group of Friends also welcomes the adoption by the Commission on the Status of Women during its fifty-seventh session, from 4 to 15 March, of its agreed conclusions entitled "The elimination of violence against women and girls".

As mandated by the Security Council in resolution 1888 (2009), the Group of Friends urges the further and timely deployment of women protection advisers to Security Council-mandated missions. Missions must plan and budget for women's protection advisers in all the relevant situations of concern. The Group of Friends also recognizes that women's human rights defenders face particular risks in conflict situations in the course of their work, as that work can include frontline protection, service provision, monitoring, fact-finding and documenting cases of sexual violence and empowering survivors of sexual violence in conflict to pursue judicial and other remedies. The Group of Friends strongly encourages Member States to take steps to ensure that women's human rights defenders are afforded greater protection to carry out their work without risk.