

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mr. Rosenthal, Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations.

I thank the President for organizing today's open debate, which gives us the opportunity to address the Security Council on conflict-related sexual violence — a subject on which my country has been very active due to its deep conviction that we should keep fighting against all forms of violence against women and girls.

I would also thank both Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura for their briefings, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka, representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for the statement she made on behalf of civil society.

Sexual violence is a repugnant and criminal phenomenon that is closely linked to insecurity and the impunity associated with a weak institutional framework for the rule of law. Those issues have been very present in earlier debates of the Council, as well as those, in other contexts, in the General Assembly, including the work in progress on the post-2015 development agenda. States have adopted measures to confront the scourge and to protect women and children, who are the most vulnerable to sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. However, in each new report, the Secretary-General takes stock of horrendous situations caused by offenders, particularly those that appear as systematic violators in the annex of the report (S/2014/181).

In addition, the United Nations has taken concrete measures, including, inter alia, the creation of the position now occupied by Ms. Bangura, the application of provisions for monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements, and the deployment of women protection advisers to numerous peacekeeping operations. Despite those achievements, however, the phenomenon persists, as we have sadly observed in such recent cases as Syria, Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For that reason, the Council should not stop insisting that States in conflict or post-conflict situations give priority to reforming the rule of law and strengthening the capacity of national institutions, including civilian and military justice systems, because those weaknesses are the primary obstacles to ensuring accountability. That leads to a widespread impunity, which in turn has negative effects on access to justice and the safety of survivors.

In our own internal conflict, which ended more than 17 years ago, there remain victims and consequences of the atrocities committed, and that has helped us to produce legislation on violence against women and girls so that they can live in a stable and democratic society. Preventing violence against women is a priority for the Government of Guatemala, and in recent years legislation has been adopted and institutions and policies created to complete that mission.

Finally, one of the legacies of our own presidency of the Security Council in October 2012 was the presidential statement S/PRST/2012/23, which addressed the need to eliminate obstacles to women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict situations.

We are pleased to have made a contribution to the work of the Council in the matter.