

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Resolution 1820**  
**Thursday, June 19, 2008**

*Statement by H.E Mr. Hannesson, Representative of Iceland to the United Nations*

I have the honour of delivering the following statement on behalf of all five Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden — each of which is sponsoring the draft resolution today.

First of all, allow me to thank the United States presidency of the Security Council for having organized this open debate.

Women are often victims of armed conflict, but they can also play a central role in preventing and resolving violent conflict as actors in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The ongoing high incidence of horrific sexual violence against women and girls in conflicts demands the attention of the international community as a human rights matter and as a question of ensuring respect for international humanitarian law. It is an issue that has a direct bearing on peace and security, and it is therefore very timely and appropriate that the Security Council is addressing the issue once again. Landmark resolution 1325 (2000) continues to require full implementation.

It is clear that the use of rape and sexual violence exacerbates conflicts and also perpetuates them long after active hostilities are over. Such crimes inflict indelible scars on individuals, families and societies, which makes reconciliation and peacebuilding much more difficult. The scars of sexual violence on the psyche of the victims, their families, the children it often results in, and even the perpetrators, are the explosive remnants of war of the mind, erupting unpredictably, doing long-term damage and making reconstruction of a sustainable peace very difficult indeed.

A climate of impunity on sexual violence continues to exist. We must all join forces to end impunity for such crimes. The Security Council should respond urgently to incidents of sexual violence in conflicts and bring measures to bear to ensure that parties to armed conflict understand clearly that they will pay a heavy price for employing or permitting sexual violence. All Member States must do their part in ensuring that individuals suspected of such crimes are brought to justice in accordance with the necessary legislation at the national level. We also call on States to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court, whose Statute explicitly states that rape and other forms of sexual violence can be prosecuted as war crimes or crimes against humanity. Amnesties should not extend to crimes of sexual violence.

Clear guidance for peacekeeping missions is also needed on how to make operational the mandate to protect civilians, including women and girls, from sexual violence. That approach calls for strong and specific mandates from the Security Council, as well as sufficient means and more comprehensive reporting by the United Nations system. There is a need to make full use of available expertise, including from human rights mechanisms such as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

All Member States should ensure that training of peacekeepers includes training on resolution 1325 (2000). Furthermore, it is vital that peacebuilding and reconstruction plans include comprehensive victim- protection and support mechanisms, such as shelters for the victims and their families and gender units within the police.

A key element in ensuring the protection of women and girls from sexual violence during conflicts and in post-conflict situations is the participation of women in decision-making processes in all areas and at all levels. Whether it involves practical protection measures, such as the gathering of fuel in safety, or more complex issues, such as the reintegration of combatants into society, the input and experiences of women are essential to success and sustainability.

The participation of women is therefore directly relevant to the maintenance of peace and security. In addition to increasing the presence of women on military and police forces, new avenues must be explored on how to deploy more women in peacekeeping missions, including by establishing civilian observer components. Stronger efforts must be made by the United Nations to include women in discussions on the management and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, including in rebuilding societies, security sector reform, transitional justice and post-conflict political and economic processes.

The Secretary-General and relevant United Nations bodies should also redouble their efforts to recruit women to high-level positions. The United Nations system as a whole should intensify its efforts to recruit more women at all levels. The same appeal goes out to all States Members of the United Nations. It is our responsibility to ensure that the United Nations has a solid base from which to recruit.

The Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping missions should continue and be strengthened. There must be no impunity for peacekeepers either. Again, wider participation by women in such missions would help. The highly successful Indian women's police corps in Liberia is encouraging in this regard, as is the high percentage of women in the group of Nigerian police that Nordic and African police have jointly trained for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. It is also important to provide appropriate and recurrent training to all personnel involved in peacekeeping operations, including on ethical conduct and the zero-tolerance policy.

Regional bodies are becoming increasingly important actors under the mandate of the Security Council in addressing regional issues of peace and security. Such bodies should be closely linked to the discussions and decisions in relation to women, peace and security. The Secretary-General is encouraged to take a leading role in this matter.

The Security Council should seriously consider the establishment of a working group to monitor conflict situations where sexual violence is widely or systematically used as a weapon of war, as is the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Such a working group could assist the Council in reacting rapidly to urgent cases and making proposals on appropriate actions, including emergency obstetric and other sexual and reproductive health services and measures to prevent and treat HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, psychosocial support, as well as early measures to enforce the rule of law and crime victims' access to justice.

We support the proposal made by the United States in its concept paper that Security Council mandates should be strengthened to prevent sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and provide greater protection for women and girls from widespread and systematic attacks by parties to armed conflicts. This should be dealt with systematically both when mandates for ongoing operations come up for renewal and when mandates for new operations are adopted.

We further encourage the Council to follow up on the recommendation by the Secretary-General of developing a monitoring mechanism to improve its contribution to preventing and redressing violence against women in armed conflict.

Finally, all the Nordic countries have completed or are in the final stages of completing national implementation plans for resolution 1325 (2000) and encourage other Member States to do the same, as a matter of urgency. We also suggest that lessons learned from countries that have such a plan be used in supporting other countries in preparing their own plans.