

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

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made earlier today on behalf of the European Union and that made on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a particularly heinous and barbaric crime. It is undoubtedly underreported, yet even so the recent Secretary-General's report (S/2014/181) presents an extensive catalogue of crimes that are ongoing in 20 different country situations in conflict and in post-conflict settings. The victims — women and girls, men and boys — are invariably among the most vulnerable in their societies. Since last year's annual open debate (see S/PV.7044), we have seen further significant normative progress. Resolution 2106 (2013), adopted last June, addressed impunity and effective justice. Resolution 2122 (2013) of last October calls for more consistent implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, with special attention to enhancing women's participation and leadership.

Last September's Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict was endorsed by 145 countries, and the United Kingdom will continue its leadership on the issue with a global summit to be convened in June. The Secretary-General has rightly concluded that at the global level there is now unprecedented commitment and momentum for decisively addressing the scourge of sexual violence in combat. And yet the critical question remains as to how we can translate that normative progress into more widespread change on the ground.

The primary route to ending sexual violence in conflict is for Governments to take national ownership of this issue, national responsibility and national action. The United Nations and the international community make an important contribution, but transformative change happens only when national political leaders adopt this agenda as their own. The Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, understands this better than anyone, having added national ownership as a sixth priority of her mission when she assumed her post. The Office of the Special Representative engages in practical conversations with the relevant parties, making clearer and more consistent requests of national authorities and in return offering ready support and capacity-building. We hope that through this dialogue the reported cases of modest gains can now be scaled up.

The United Nations generally seeks to be as practical and operational as possible in its approach, and we welcome that. For example, there is an increasing focus on training national security-sector actors in confronting sexual violence in conflict. There is certainly room to improve the protection afforded to women and girls from violence in humanitarian emergencies. Irish Aid, the Irish Government's development cooperation programme, seeks to ensure that the protection of women and girls in emergencies is one of the key criteria in its decisions on humanitarian funding. Over the next three years, we will progressively increase the funding we provide for protection in emergency and recovery contexts.

Along with the international community, civil society actors in the countries concerned play a crucial role. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Mary Robinson, is reaching out to women's groups and civil society in that region. She is building a sustainable constituency that will continue to seek change, insist on the importance of ensuring political participation by women and continue to hold Governments accountable for the commitments they have made.

Ireland was happy to be associated yesterday with an event on Burma/Myanmar organized by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security to look at issues around sexual violence in conflict. The Special Representative and a representative of Burmese civil society, Ms. K'nyaw Paw, participated in the event. A crucial part of Myanmar's transition to democracy will be addressing current and historical human rights abuses, which include crimes of sexual violence. The Secretary-General's report calls for a

comprehensive protection and service response for survivors of sexual violence, which we wholeheartedly support.

We must all strive to be as innovative as we can in motivating national leaders to adopt the agenda of women and peace and security as their own. We must be more ambitious in addressing the root causes of sexual violence in conflict — women's second-class status and the culture of impunity. And we must seek to promote women's political and economic empowerment as crucial to the long-term prevention of sexual violence. Only national political ownership in the countries concerned can lead to decisive action to end this scourge. We — the United Nations family, donors and Member States, and civil society — must do all we can to encourage such ownership.