

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict
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Statement by H.E. Ms. Ojiambo, Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations

Kenya welcomes the leadership shown by the United States in convening this debate during its presidency of the Council. My delegation also welcomes the report of the Secretary General (S/2010/604) on the implementation of resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009), and supports the progress described therein while taking note of the remaining challenges. Kenya further welcomes the adoption of resolution 1960 (2010) yesterday to strengthen responses to sexual violence through the establishment of monitoring and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence.

I wish to also thank the Secretary-General, Special Representative Wallström, Under-Secretary General Alain Le Roy and Lieutenant General Gaye for their insightful briefings yesterday.

In his report, the Secretary-General brings to light how conflict-related sexual violence has become a threat to human security, especially for women and girls. The report also highlights how such violence is an impediment to socio-economic development and peacebuilding efforts in countries emerging from conflict situations. The continued use of sexual violence as a tactic of war serves as a wake-up call to all of us that more needs to be done to protect women and girls from sexual violence.

My delegation would also wish to underscore the fact that peace, justice and security are interdependent. There can be no peace without the peace of mind that enables women to undertake their daily tasks, no justice without a national capacity to deliver justice, and no security without women's security. For this reason, the issue that we are addressing today — women and peace and security — is important and deserves the absolute and unrelenting support of the international community.

My delegation welcomes the appointment of Margot Wallström as the first Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to provide coherent and strategic leadership in the fight against this vice. We wish her the very best in executing her mandate. The international attention and the priority that the diplomatic community ascribes to her Office are already being demonstrated in the countries where she has conducted field visits. Her recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the mass rapes of over 300 women and girls in Walikale contributed to the arrest of "Lieutenant Colonel" Mayele, a suspect in the mass rapes. Kenya believes that her leadership will further serve to bolster efforts geared towards the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict.

In armed conflicts, civilian casualties far out-number those of armed combatants. While women and men alike suffer human rights violations in conflicts, women and girls are more likely to be the targets of sexual violence, especially rape. Women face additional and sometimes insurmountable obstacles to obtaining justice because of the stigma attached to survivors of sexual violence, their disadvantaged position in society and cultural challenges.

In this regard, Kenya welcomes the progress made in establishing the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law, whose mandate is to assist national authorities in strengthening the rule of law and facilitating access to justice for such victims. Kenya supports the Secretary-General's call on countries affected by conflict to draw from this important resource. Member States are also urged to ensure that the Team has sustainable funding to facilitate its work.

My delegation appreciates the very important role that women's protection advisers will play in protecting women and girls from sexual violence. Their support for the monitoring, analysis and reporting system on sexual violence and their facilitation of dialogue with parties to conflict are welcome. The development and implementation of strategies to combat sexual violence and the mainstreaming of the elimination of sexual violence into policies and operations of peacekeeping and political missions are also welcome.

While Kenya notes the proposal to determine the need for the advisers on a case-by-case basis, caution should be taken, however, to ensure that delays in making such decisions do not lead to undue suffering for women and girls in conflict situations.

The lifelong negative effects on victims and perpetrators alike of the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, buttress the call for prevention of conflict and, where conflict exists, for expedient action in ending the conflict. While recognizing that the primary responsibility for protecting civilians lies with each State, the implementation of (2008) and 1888 (2009) would be better realized through genuine partnerships between nation States and other international efforts.

Kenya condemns all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence, and has always urged compliance with humanitarian and human rights law during times of conflict. The appalling situation regarding the atrocities of sexual violence meted out against women and girls in conflict situations, especially in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa, have to be looked at seriously. As a community of States, we must rigorously implement the United Nations zero tolerance policy against sexual abuse and exploitation.

We must also provide protection for women and ensure that putting a stop to war-related sexual violence is prioritized at the international level. We laud the crucial work being carried out by agencies such as UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF to deal with such issues. Similarly, we need to galvanize support to put in place the necessary infrastructure to ensure that victims of sexual violence receive quality legal and medical assistance.

More women should be involved in peace mediation and peacebuilding processes. Decisions should not be made for women. Women must be part and parcel of a process that affects them. In that regard, Kenya's new constitutional requirement that no more than two-thirds of the members of elected or appointed bodies shall be of the same gender is a principle that can be emulated in order to mainstream women into such processes.

I wish to conclude by reiterating my country's commitment to the full and timely implementation of all Security Council resolutions against sexual violence, including resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010). Beyond that, we call on all parties to conflicts to make specific and time-bound commitments to ceasing all acts of sexual violence.