

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mrs. Kazragiene Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the United Nations.

Let me begin by expressing our appreciation to the Nigerian presidency for convening an open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, an issue that plagues and exacerbates many contemporary conflicts.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2014/181) and recommendations, including the country-specific ones, and the updated annex on suspected perpetrators. We also sincerely commend Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and her team all over the world for their hard work and dedication, as well as the members of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Friends of 1325 and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Our sincere congratulations go to Ms. Bineta Diop, the first African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, on her recent appointment.

At the outset, Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by observer of the European Union.

Despite all of the efforts of the international community and the establishment of legal and normative frameworks, including seven Security Council resolutions, conflict-related sexual violence is on the rise. It is getting more complex. It is used to displace civilian populations, to seize land and property and to illicitly extract natural resources. Children are sexually assaulted and suffer from stigma when born out of rape. Young girls are trafficked, forced to marry rebels and used as messengers. Boys and men are subjected to sexualized violence. Sexual violence has become a tactic and weapon of war and impunity prevails. The only way to effectively address this scourge is a comprehensive and integrated approach which entails prevention, early warning, justice, accountability, the participation of women in political processes and economic empowerment.

The inclusion of provisions on sexual violence in the Arms Trade Treaty is just one of the recent encouraging examples of action in that regard. In its turn the Security Council, in resolution 2106 (2013) — the fourth resolution focused on conflict-related sexual violence — has reaffirmed the centrality of gender equality and women's political, social and economic empowerment to preventing sexual violence and further developed the operational framework on conflict-related sexual violence. Among other operational provisions, it calls for the further deployment of women protection advisers and gender advisers to the relevant United Nations peacekeeping and political missions, as well as humanitarian operations.

The Security Council has also recognized the need for more systematic monitoring and more timely, objective, accurate and reliable information as a basis for prevention and response. The Security Council's support of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence has contributed to a better understanding of the scope and roots of the problem and facilitated a more proactive stance of United Nations teams on the ground. Having more robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms, the Security Council could also consider developing a procedure that would ensure systematic monitoring of the implementation of its decisions and commitments taken up by parties to conflict.

At the same time, the lack of adequate national capacity and expertise to prevent, investigate and prosecute violence remain among the main impediments in combating sexual violence and ensuring accountability. We are encouraged by the United Nations efforts to assist the strengthening of national capacities. We welcome the extremely important work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which is being rapidly deployed in situations of particular concern with respect to sexual violence in armed conflict to assist national authorities in strengthening the rule of law.

Another concrete and laudable example is the joint UN-Women/Justice Rapid Response training, roster management, and deployment mechanism established upon a request of the Secretary-General to ensure that each commission of inquiry is provided with expertise

on investigations of sexual and gender-based violence.

It is also of paramount importance that peacekeepers continue to be trained to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, and that special training materials be prepared, preferably in the native languages of peacekeepers. Peacekeeping forces must ensure that internally displaced persons camps are free of alleged perpetrators. The United Nations Blue Helmets themselves must strictly follow the rules of conduct.

Lithuania strongly supports the Group of Eight declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict, and we are glad to learn that over 140 States have already endorsed the declaration of commitment that was introduced in New York in September 2013. Lithuania looks forward to the global summit in London in June this year, where specific actions are to be identified and agreed.

However broad and strong it may be, international assistance will not provide sustainable results unless it is complemented by national commitment. National political leaders have a major role to play in ensuring that international law is transposed into national law and implemented. National ownership and responsibility should be key priorities. We welcome the facilitation of national responsibility efforts through the joint communiqués between the United Nations and the Governments of the Central African Republic, Côte D'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Somalia, as per the Secretary-General's report.

We note with appreciation that women, peace and security issues are included in the Secretary-General's country-specific reports under a separate heading. The Security Council could also consistently include the women, peace and security agenda in the terms of reference of its visiting missions. As the Council continues to horizontally integrate the issues of sexual violence into its work, including in the drafting or renewing mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, relevant sanctions committees must review their listing and de-listing guidelines, add sexual violence to their lists of criteria, harmonize designation criteria for listed individuals by including any relevant charges from international justice mechanisms, consider sanctioning parties identified by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Council at its disposal has and should actively consider other means to ensure accountability, such as a referrals to the International Criminal Court, special tribunals and commissions of inquiry.

The International Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic should provide all relevant information to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) in order to list the perpetrators and send a strong signal that all offenders will be held accountable. The capacity of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic to monitor and report human rights violations, including sexual violence, must also be enhanced.

The sexual violence in Syria against women and men, including in Government detention facilities; non-State armed groups targeting female family members of Government forces; and more than 300 cases of gender-based violence in three health clinics in Damascus and Rural Damascus alone are clear violations of international humanitarian law and resolution 2139 (2014). We support referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Only by using all available tools at our hands will we be able to prevent further violence and end this vicious cycle of impunity. The experience in combating conflict-related sexual violence in the Central African Republic, Syria and many other countries, as reported by the Secretary-General, shows that the United Nations has to find meaningful ways to engage non-State actors.

Finally, let me touch upon the issue of survivors. Care for and protection of survivors of sexual violence are another vital issue to address in order to fight stigmatization and reprisals and prevent violence and impunity in the future. We believe that reparations could significantly contribute to restoring justice, especially when other means are not feasible.

Twenty years after the end of the Balkan War, an estimated 20,000 survivors of crimes of sexual violence have not seen justice. The alleged perpetrators enjoy positions of influence while victims and their children born of rape are left to suffer stigmatization and shame. Women were excluded from the peace negotiations, even though women's organizations were the first to initiate meetings with people from the other side, trying to find common ground and ways to stop the violence. That is the probable reason why the Dayton peace accords did not include the provisions recommended in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Indeed, our toolbox is full of useful instruments but it is now time to take matters into our own hands, consolidate our actions on the ground and deliver together and in close cooperation with all humanitarian, diplomatic, justice, security and civil society actors.