

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Ms. Murmokaite, Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the United Nations.*

The progress achieved in addressing the issue of sexual violence in conflict since the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda placed sexual aggression on the agenda of post-conflict justice is undeniable. The relevant Security Council resolutions have created an extensive toolkit for tackling conflict-related sexual violence.

As horrendous assault on individual bodies and human dignity, sexual violence in conflict goes far beyond common banditry and has been repeatedly used in the imposition of wider political agendas, the destruction of opponents, ethnic cleansing, forced displacement and clearing of access to resources and territory.

My delegation therefore congratulates the Rwandan presidency of the Security Council for holding this important debate. We welcome the recommendations by the Secretary-General contained in his most recent report (S/2013/149). We also commend the work and personal dedication of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura.

Speaking elsewhere earlier this year, Ms. Bangura insisted that sexual violence as a tactic of war was as effective as any bomb and as destructive as any mine, and that it needed to be addressed with the same determination as any other deadly weapon used in war. Indeed, we cannot stem conflict-related sexual aggression unless we are determined to prevent, protect and prosecute. For as long as the perpetrators know they can get away with it, that barbaric tactic of warfare will continue, with inevitable peace and security implications.

While we associate ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, I shall limit myself to the following points at this stage.

When it comes to conflict-related sexual crimes, my delegation urges the Security Council to use the full range of means at its disposal to tackle impunity, including systematic referrals to the International Criminal Court, mandating commissions of inquiry and explicitly and vocally condemning such crimes.

Lithuania supports the full implementation of the provisions of resolution 1960 (2010) on rape and other forms of sexual violence as designation criteria when adopting or renewing targeted sanctions in situations of armed conflict. We expect such criteria to be consistently applied in sanctioning entities and individuals identified in the Secretary-General's reports and those named by the Special Representative.

My delegation would welcome enhanced interaction between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the relevant Security Council Sanctions Committees and expert groups, as well as between the Special Representative and the Council as a whole. Furthermore, we call for the inclusion of provisions regarding conflict-related sexual violence in all the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions.

Tackling impunity is hard to imagine without a robust monitoring and reporting system. That may be easier said than done, however, especially where technical capacities are inadequate or where a critical lack of confidence in transitional justice create serious impediments. If the perpetrators of sexual violence are free to return and establish themselves among those they have abused, victims will continue to live in fear and countless abuses will remain unreported. Developing the requisite

capabilities and restoring victims' trust in justice are essential for the purposes of prevention and deterrence. Providing better support for victims, including through women's protection advisers, reparation mechanisms and women's systematic inclusion in all aspects of conflict resolution, post-conflict reconciliation and transitional justice, is key to restoring victims' trust and ensuring that crimes will not go unpunished.

The Council and individual Member States have an important role to play in those matters. My delegation welcomes the recent declaration by the Group of Eight, including the provisions on improved investigation and documentation of sexual violence in conflict. The Council in particular should see to it that security sector reforms and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes are fully responsive to the sensitivities arising from conflict-related sexual violence and provide rigorous vetting and training of national security institutions. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that blanket amnesties should not be applied where conflict-related sexual violence is in question.

With respect to a zero-tolerance policy, my delegation firmly supports the inclusion of provisions on a zero-tolerance policy vis-à-vis sexual misconduct by United Nations personnel in all the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding missions. For the time being, that is not the case, and we hope that the gap will be redressed as mandates are renewed.

On a broader scale, however, we as the international community should be using all means and opportunities available for stemming sexual violence as a tool of war. The combined power of women's full participation; consistent support and protection to victims, human rights defenders, activists and journalists who expose the crimes; education and global awareness-raising campaigns; and the personal engagement of world leaders, spiritual authorities and community leaders are essential in fostering a global zero-tolerance environment for those heinous crimes. We expect no less from the Council, as the most authoritative body on peace and security matters, but to take the lead in raising the stakes for all those who think they can engage, unchallenged, in rape or sexual abuse to a prohibitive degree.