

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict
16th-17th December 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Yanerit Cristina Morgan Sotomayor, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

I thank the Secretary-General for his statement and welcome the valuable briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström, as well as the statements of Under-Secretary-General Le Roy and Lieutenant General Gaye. Allow me also to express Mexico's appreciation for the leadership that the United States has shown in the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict.

During its membership of the Security Council, Mexico has sought to promote a broad agenda of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, pursuant to the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law. In these past two years, significant steps have been taken to ensure that women and children will no longer be the principal victims of the violence to which armed conflict give rise.

One aspect of particular concern is sexual violence in armed conflict or post-conflict situations, as that subject cannot be approached simply from a gender perspective. The impact on society of sexual violence used as a tactic of war is so great that addressing it must be an integral part of any strategy for peace and security. Sexual violence encourages the perpetuation of conflicts, promotes the displacement of populations and limits development opportunities. Certain groups, such as displaced persons, refugees and persons with disabilities, are particularly vulnerable to such crimes and require special attention.

Mexico believes that it is not enough to recall that crimes of sexual violence against women have been criminalized. It is necessary to act on our support for strengthening the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order to prosecute the perpetrators of sexual violence in the context of armed conflict. For that reason, we are closely following the work of the ICC in the case brought against Jean-Pierre Bemba, and we reiterate our firm support for the Court.

The atrocities committed against women and children in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and other regions of the world are permanent reminders of the fact that existing norms are flagrantly flouted. Ensuring respect for international law is an ongoing challenge, for which the primary responsibility falls to States. Mexico reiterates its call on States to fully meet their obligations under international humanitarian law and the norms of human rights and refugee law.

With the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative, an important step was taken to address this phenomenon, and in the short time that she has held that post Ms. Wallström has made it clear that, while there are broad challenges, it is possible to provide a comprehensive and effective response to victims of sexual violence and to make that issue a priority of our strategies for peace and reconciliation. Through resolution 1960 (2010), adopted today, the Security Council has strengthened the mechanisms for the collection and analysis of information on the ground. It gives the Special Representative an additional tool by asking her to include, in the annex to her reports, the names of parties to an armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council who systematically commit rape or other forms of sexual violence.

My delegation is particularly satisfied by the coordination that Ms. Wallström has maintained with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. It seems to us that, concerning the particularities and special focus of each mechanism, there are clear synergies and areas of cooperation that can further optimize the impact of the two agendas of protection for civilians in general and women and children in particular.

We recognize that the Security Council has taken determined steps to eliminate the problem of sexual violence in armed conflict. It must continue its work pursuant to resolution 1888 (2009) based on the following four pillars: the fight against impunity; the prevention of new cases and protection of vulnerable groups; security sector reform; and comprehensive care and reparations for victims.

The Security Council faces significant challenges. It must ensure the functioning and impact of the monitoring

system and the presentation of reports on sexual violence in conflict, and systematically include components on gender and on prevention of sexual violence in the terms of reference of its field visits and the mandates for its peacekeeping operations.

My delegation hopes that the Security Council will step up its efforts to combat this problem more effectively