

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

*Statement by Mr. Kyaw Tin, Permanent Mission of Myanmar to the United Nations.*

At the outset, my delegation wishes to express our appreciation to the Rwandan presidency for organizing this open debate on the important issue of women and peace and security.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

We also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Hawa Bangura, and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Keïta Diakité, for their informative briefings this morning.

My delegation takes the floor to add its voice in condemning all form of violence against women and girls in armed conflicts. Since the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), 13 years ago, there has been a growing recognition that gender equality plays an integral part in advancing development and peace and security, and that women can make valuable contributions to conflict resolution and in rebuilding their communities.

This year's report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) not only highlights several concerns on violence against women, but also refers to the practice of forced marriage by certain armed forces and to the links between sexual violence and the illicit extraction of natural resources.

We thank the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for its consultations with our Mission in the process of preparing the annual report. However, my delegation regrets that the report still refers to our country, along with parties to armed conflict credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for such acts of violence, although Myanmar is making substantial progress in national reconciliation and bringing an end to conflicts with virtually all ethnic armed groups. The report does, however, acknowledge the fact that the allegations that have been received have not been independently verified due to limited access.

Armed conflicts could naturally breed violence, especially against vulnerable groups. At the same time, such situations could also be exploited to make up or inflate stories of violence by either side of a conflict for its own agenda. Objectivity and accuracy are of the utmost importance in the reporting exercise, especially when dealing with sensitive issues. A few isolated incidents committed by certain individuals cannot always be construed as the policy of a certain Government or institution. The most important issue in this connection is to have proper legal action taken against any perpetrator.

Women in Myanmar are protected by culture, religion and laws. Myanmar's tradition and culture, which abhor the sexual exploitation of women, strongly contribute to our national efforts to promote gender equality and to reduce sexual violence against women and girls. Gender-based violence is being addressed through legal action against all perpetrators, regardless of whoever commits the crime. Members of the armed forces have to observe not only the penal code but also the military's code of conduct. We fully support a zero- tolerance policy with regard to violence against women and girls.

The best way to ensure the protection of women and children in armed conflicts is to put a speedy end to such conflicts. The new Government has made unprecedented strides in its efforts at national reconciliation, resulting in establishing ceasefire agreements with all but one ethnic group. Peace talks

with the remaining group are also gaining momentum. We are confident that lasting peace will soon prevail in every corner of our country. Such developments will do away with the alleged violence against women in the dwindling areas of conflict.

As Myanmar moves towards to an open society, the press and media are enjoying greater freedom. The newfound media freedom is helping our efforts in addressing violence against women through independent monitoring and reporting. In addition, a complaint mechanism to report such abuses is also being put in place by our national human rights commission. As a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Myanmar is also implementing a 10-year national strategic plan for the advancement of women and is in the process of drafting a law on violence against women.

I would like to voice our support for the Secretary- General's assertion that Members States bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for preventing and addressing conflict-related violence. My delegation would like to conclude by reaffirming its commitment to enhance its efforts for the prevention and elimination of violence against women in conflict areas through strong legal action and national reconciliation.