

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber**  
*Statement by Mr. Naanda, Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations.*

Namibia is pleased to participate in this open debate on sexual violence in conflict under the agenda item “Women and peace and security”. I wish to congratulate you, Madam President, and your country, Nigeria, on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of April 2014. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and his Special Representative Zainab Bangura for their informative statements.

Sexual violence has increasingly become a grave concern and has proliferated in conflict and post-conflict situations. Women and girls are raped, forced into prostitution and sexual slavery, and subjected to various sexual acts that leave them with severe physical, psychological and emotional trauma. Their lives are shattered, their hopes are destroyed and they are left with permanent stigma.

The report (S/2014/181) before us clearly indicates that the prevalence of sexual violence during periods of conflicts often leaves lasting legacies, with acute consequences for the security of women and children in the post-conflict era and beyond. That is demonstrated by high levels of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women and children in some post-conflict settings, which ultimately has a direct impact on the durability of peace and prospects for sustainable development.

The United Nations, and in particular this body, have convened meetings to deliberate on mitigating factors that can be employed to prevent and or curb such a scourge. However, despite all efforts, the scourge still persists and continues to terrorize communities, thereby posing a serious security concern. That is so because perpetrators are left unpunished and the culture of impunity aggravates conflict cycles. Fighting sexual violence in conflict is a shared responsibility that requires a broad-based approach that involves the international community, regional and national Governments, civil societies and other stakeholders. National Governments should foster national programmes that take measures aimed at preventing and stopping the occurrence of sexual violence and prosecute perpetrators. In that regard, national stakeholders should be fully engaged in order to foster national ownership, leadership and responsibility. While recognizing that Governments bear the primary responsibility for the safety and rights of women and the protection of all citizens in their countries, the international community should support those efforts, while fully respecting national sovereignty and focusing on capacity-building and resolving funding and technical difficulties.

Furthermore, it is important to ensure that sexual violence considerations are explicitly and consistently reflected in ceasefire and peace agreements, as well as in all security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes that involve the United Nations. In that regard, the adoption by the General Assembly of the Arms Trade Treaty was of critical importance, as it is the first international legal instrument that explicitly includes a gender criterion in arms transfers if there is a possibility that such transfers, would be used to commit violence against women and children. We celebrated the first anniversary of the historic adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty on 2 April and we look forward to its entry into force.

The elimination of conflict-related sexual violence would not be possible without addressing the root causes of gender inequality and changing the mindset of the perpetrators, victims and society at large. Victims should be encouraged to speak out and report violence. In most cases victims, especially women, prefer to remain silent to avoid the stigma of being ostracized from their communities, cast out by their husbands and families, and left destitute with their children. Women’s empowerment and mainstreaming gender equality in peacekeeping processes and ceasefire agreements are crucial in fighting the scourge. Furthermore, survivors and their families should be provided with sufficient medical, psychological and legal support and rehabilitation programmes.

Capacity-building and technical support from the international community are relevant in helping national Governments deal with sexual violence matters. Governments lack adequate national capacities to investigate sexual violence cases and prosecute sexual violence offenders, and that, regrettably, impedes on accountability.

Sufficient resources must be devoted to women-led civil society organizations, particularly those providing services to survivors and those that enable women to access justice and participate in decision-making.

We recognize the work of non-governmental organizations in their role of training officials from Member States, as investigators of gender-based violence for rapid deployment to conflict areas. Namibia supports such initiatives as they can go a long way in assisting the international community in investigating those horrible crimes by bringing the perpetrators to book.

Namibia wishes to re-emphasize the importance of the role of women in conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding. As such, we fully support the inclusion of women in security systems, such as the armed forces, the police and peacekeeping operations and special political missions in support of various United Nations resolutions that recognize that important role. We remain convinced that for the achievement of comprehensive and sustainable peace, all efforts should be made to ensure the participation and contribution of women to peace negotiations and during the execution of post-conflict strategies and programmes.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Namibia condemns all forms of violence against women in armed conflict and calls for the full implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions. We also urge the parties to conflicts to abide by international legal instruments to protect women and other disadvantaged groups.