

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

First of all, I wish to thank the Nigerian presidency for organizing this important debate of the Security Council today. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their comprehensive briefings this morning.

For far too long, the role of gender in conflict has remained the least studied, least understood and least utilized in the realm of peace and security. I note the progress made both in protecting women and girls and in giving women the protection roles in United Nations missions since the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000). Yet, women and girls continue to be the targets of choice of sexual and other violence in conflict. It is only through concerted work that we can succeed in eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls during or after conflict.

Nepal believes that the United Nations system should play the central role in dealing with sexual violence in conflict. For this purpose, it should continue to empower women by encouraging equality and by implementing the human rights instruments already in place. Women must be sent to the field as peacekeepers and peacemakers in greater numbers. There must be more women in the United Nations system, also at the policy level. They must be the agents of positive change. Only in developing a competitive edge by acquiring the requisite skills will women be able to take advantage of their opportunities and play their entrusted roles effectively. At the end of the day, it is the quality that sustains the gains of women to create a safer global community.

Nepal has excellent experience with its national plan of action to implement resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) — the first in South Asia. Encouraged by positive results, the Government is now localizing them at subnational levels. Our top priorities are increasing the participation of women in decision-making processes, protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence with a zero-tolerance policy and ending impunity. Crucially, Nepal has also introduced policy measures to provide relief to the victims of conflict.

Since the peace process started eight years ago, Nepal has steadily moved forward in empowering women, including those affected by conflict. The interim Constitution requires that women constitute 33 per cent of candidates at all levels of election, including the Constituent Assembly. Moreover, this proportion must also hold in each district-level peace committee, thus enabling women to address local level post-conflict issues across the board. As an active troop- and police-contributing country, Nepal is increasing the number of women in its army and police forces, who also serve in United Nations peacekeeping missions. The peacekeeping training package includes courses on the protection of women and girls from sexual violence, during and after conflict.

While the new Constituent Assembly is engaged in delivering a constitution as desired by the people of Nepal, instruments for transitional justice are also in the making. The Government's total and unflinching commitment to promoting and protecting human rights has engendered mechanisms, from the centre to the grass-roots level, designed to combat gender and sexual violence.

Emerging from conflict, Nepal knows well that even with the best of measures, the emotional and physical turmoil victims suffer due to sexual violence cannot be healed *ex post facto*. An enduring solution necessitates the implementation of robust preventive policies, which Nepal fully supports. Likewise, Nepal stands ready to join hands in all efforts to ensure that sexual violence in conflict is shunned everywhere and at all times, that perpetrators are brought to justice, and that the victims are protected and fully rehabilitated.