

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

My delegation welcomes this debate on the important report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2014/181). The fact that the report covers incidents of conflict-related sexual violence in over 20 countries confirms the urgency of our meeting today.

We fully align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. In the interests of time, I will deliver a shortened version of my speech; the full text is available.

In the view of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, conflict-related sexual violence is not a stand-alone problem that can be solved in isolation. We need a fully integrated approach that addresses deeply rooted gender inequalities and works to empower women.

We pay tribute to the work of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura. It is a privilege to sit next to her and an honour to support her work. We agree with her that now is the time to focus on progressing from principles, goals and ambitions to concrete action, operational measures and practical tools.

The Netherlands seeks to use such practical tools in all domains of our foreign policy: the promotion of peace, justice and development. When it comes to peace and security, we contribute civilian and military personnel to multilateral missions. Addressing gender issues and sexual violence in conflict is an integral part of our national preparation for such missions. For instance, we currently have a contingent deployed in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. All of our police and military officer have received predeployment training on gender, human rights and international humanitarian law.

We also offer regular training on gender issues to military personnel, diplomats and police, as well as to civilian experts and activists. We make civilian expertise on gender and combating sexual violence available to United Nations missions, for example to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With regard to justice, we welcome the focus Ms. Bangura and United Nations Action have put on issues of impunity and accountability around conflict-related sexual violence. National legal systems in conflict-affected countries can be weakened in the course of the conflict and in the reconstruction phase. The Netherlands therefore attaches great value to legitimate and professional justice systems. We therefore support rule of law programming in several countries on a bilateral basis.

There is also the need for a clear role for the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other tribunals. My country very much supports the broad jurisdiction of the ICC on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence. It has a very strong preventative effect. The report of the Secretary-General also shows that we need to do even more to optimize the protection of women and girls, who are the primary victims of sexual violence. Despite our collective efforts in that regard, women and girls will face the long-term consequences of such violence. They deserve and have the right to sexual and reproductive health, including safe abortion services. To recall what our French colleague said this morning, to withhold such services to victims of sexual violence is to add insult to injury.

Women and girls are never only victims, though. We know about the resilience of many survivors. We also know that empowered women make the difference: they participate in decision-making and take up leadership roles, particularly on issues of conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and reconstruction. We believe in the power of women as agents of peace and as representatives of communities living in conflict. As women are empowered, sexual violence, causes of gender inequality and accountability will more likely be addressed as integral parts of peace and reconstruction processes. For example, we are working with UN-Women to support the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy to make their voices heard. The

initiative of the women of Syria inspired many and offered a new window of hope for a political solution to the horrific conflict in Syria.

We welcome further commitment of the Security Council to the full agenda of resolution 1325 (2000) as we try to do in the Netherlands. Our national Action Plan 1325 promotes civil society programming in support of women's political participation and leadership. We support women's rights organizations around the globe and we contribute to several United Nations trust funds, such as the United Nations Women's Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women.

Together we must continue our common efforts to combat the crime of sexual violence in conflict through concrete and collective action. Rest assured that the Netherlands will continue to be a partner of the United Nations, the Special Representative and Member States in this important endeavor.