

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

We thank you, Madam President, for convening today's open debate on this important subject. We also thank the Secretary-General and Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for their briefings. We appreciate the statement made by the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Rhoda Misaka.

Sexual violence, rape, molestation and different forms of sexual abuse committed by individuals or groups are egregious and reprehensible crimes. Sexual violence has been systematically used as an instrument of war in many parts of the world, as testimonies this morning demonstrated. Sexual predators target vulnerable women and girls, men and boys. Their criminal acts inflict deep trauma, leave lasting scars, cause serious moral harm and impose huge social and economic costs on communities. Sexual violence remains one of the major causes of people's fleeing from their homes and of the resultant displacement. Those crimes constitute a threat to international peace and security.

The United Nations has done a lot, but needs to do more. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/181) notes, the situation has actually worsened in certain parts of the world. Our collective efforts should therefore focus on converting commitments into concrete action-oriented preventive measures. We should collectively create a culture of zero tolerance for sexual violence. In that context, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, the Security Council should continue to address the women and peace and security agenda in accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That mandate pertains to sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. Those parameters should be fully respected in order to preserve the strong consensus that exists on the issue. We should guard against the inclusion of peripheral issues that relate to women's rights in general, or which do not fall within the Council's mandate.

Secondly, ending impunity should continue to remain the highest priority. Perpetrators should be brought to justice and they should be removed from their positions of authority. We strongly endorse the appeal Special Representative Bangura made today to shift the stigma from the victims to the perpetrators of sexual crimes.

Thirdly, more human and financial resources should be invested in security sector reform and disarmament demobilization and reintegration efforts to erect barriers against sexual violence. In post-conflict situations, too, close attention should be given to punitive and retributive justice. In that context, capacity-building of the transitional criminal justice mechanisms, including increased prosecutorial capacity, should be accorded priority.

Fourthly, United Nations personnel operating in areas of armed conflict should be properly trained and equipped to provide services on the ground for victims of sexual violence. The inter-agency network Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict is a useful platform. The inclusion of women protection advisers in peacekeeping operations is making a difference on the ground.

Fifthly, multidimensional peacekeeping missions with relevant mandates play a key role in combating sexual violence. As a leading participant in peacekeeping, Pakistan has contributed to that effort. Gender sensitization has been a mandatory part of our training for peacekeepers and is a core cultural value. Pakistani women have also served as police officers, doctors and nurses in various missions in Asia, Africa and the Balkans. Our feedback about the work of police officers is positive. Women police officers instinctively and because of their training show empathy to women trapped in conflict situations who in turn relate instantly to those police officers.

Sixthly, women should participate in larger numbers in the decision-making processes on ceasefires, peace agreements and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Finally, the best way to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence is to prevent and resolve conflicts and address the cross-cutting issues of governance, the rule of law and economic development. The issues of sexual violence and the overall objectives of protecting the rights of women and children need to be pursued by the Council and the United Nations system in a holistic manner within their respective mandates. That requires a comprehensive multisectoral and multidimensional approach, as suggested by the Secretary-General.