



# PHILIPPINES

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at the Thematic Debate on Women and Peace and Security:  
Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict

By

**ELMER G. CATO**  
Second Secretary

Security Council  
19 June 2008

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Mr. President,

The Philippines joins previous speakers in condemning acts of sexual violence inflicted on women and girls by parties involved in armed conflict. Sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is something that the international community should not close its eyes to. As we speak, reports on how women and girls have found themselves victims of sexual violence and also on how they remain vulnerable to increased risk of violence from parties involved in armed conflicts continue to stream from various hotspots around the world.

The sexual abuse committed against women and girls is deeply rooted in a pervasive culture of discrimination highlighted by the unequal power equation that denies females equal status. This inequality is manifested in a number of ways during conflict, particularly through the social, political and cultural norms that identify women and girls not only as the property of men but also as sexual objects. This inequality also finds form as a tool of war with violence directed at women being considered an attack against the values and honor of a society.

Mr. President,

While it is easy to see the vulnerabilities of women, there is a tendency to regard them only as victims of violence, most especially sexual violence. Unfortunately, this obscures the many positive roles that women play in conflict situations, especially as agents of peace and reconciliation as called for under Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security.

The Philippines continues to regard Resolution 1325 as an important contribution of the Security Council to address the complex issues affecting women in countries torn by conflict. Resolution 1325 is an instrument that brings to the fore a United Nations gender lens to conflict analysis, monitoring and resolution and this has greatly impacted on the kind of transformative responses that are needed to address the gender dimension of conflict.

The fundamental strategy of the Philippines in pursuing Resolution 1325 lies in enabling more women to systematically participate in conflict prevention, management, resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding, while at the same time, rehabilitating their communities and ensuring basic services and livelihood. Women are empowered to

take part in local peace processes by building capacities and mobilizing peace constituencies. Women in indigenous communities, for instance, are even serving as intermediaries in local peace dialogues and as mediators in the restoration of broken peace pacts.

Because the roles that women play are critical to addressing the issues that affect them, the Philippines remains convinced that women must be harnessed as active agents in confronting gender-based violence.

Mr. President,

The response to sexual exploitation in conflict situations necessitates a comprehensive approach. As this entails a response that should address the various dimensions of the problem, the United Nations must mobilize the various entities within its system and build on their comparative advantages to address the root causes, manifestations and consequences of conflict.

The Philippines recognizes the role of the Security Council in addressing conflict and its various dimensions, including the gender dimension, *to the extent that this is in accordance with the Council's mandate*. It should be emphasized that since the issue of sexual violence requires a more holistic response, including political, economic, social and cultural, the Security Council's action, which comprises only part of the response, must be coherently coordinated with the efforts of other bodies such as the development-oriented agencies.

The Philippines also wishes to underscore the importance of the regional context in assessing and addressing conflict as well as in coming up with the appropriate responses to the gender dimensions of the conflicts. In this connection, the Philippines urges the Security Council to work closely with the relevant regional intergovernmental and civil society organizations in the areas of conflict.

Mr. President,

While the Philippines recognizes the need to urgently confront sexual violence in conflict, it believes that the Security Council must also exercise caution to ensure that it does not confront the conflict situation narrowly by just focusing on palliatives to address the issue of gender violence.

As sexual violence is part of the bigger context of conflict, the Security Council must see to it that it also uses its mandate mainly to assess and address this broader picture. Bearing in mind the need to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted measures and sanctions, the Security Council must be cognizant that such, if contemplated, do not exacerbate the conflict nor give rise to negative consequences for the civilian population.

The Security Council can concretely contribute to gender-sensitive conflict prevention and resolution, including post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, by ensuring

that gender issues are integrated in the DDR process. This could also be accomplished by incorporating the necessary gender training in the security sector and facilitating the establishment of necessary infrastructure and capacity for women's access to justice as well as cooperative work with NGOs and other community groups.

To further address the issue of sexual violence, the Security Council could support systems for gender-sensitive monitoring of conflicts, including the collection of sex-disaggregated data and information with the engagement of national and local authorities. This is important to facilitate national ownership and accountability. The Security Council could also advocate for the inclusion of gender violence issues in peace accords and peace processes between parties to conflict.

Mr. President,

The Philippines believes that the Security Council can help address the issue of gender violence in conflict areas by seeing to it that the design and training of peacekeeping missions include the deployment of more female police and military personnel; the necessary gender-sensitivity training by troop-contributing countries; and the enforcement of a policy of zero-tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse involving peacekeepers.

In the case of the Philippines, gender-sensitivity is incorporated in the pre-deployment training for personnel of our Armed Forces and our National Police whom we send out to support UN peacekeeping operations. As early as four years ago, the Philippines had put in place a zero-tolerance policy on misconduct, especially on sexual exploitation and abuse that could be committed by our peacekeepers. This policy of zero tolerance, which is firmly embedded in the revised policy framework and guidelines governing Philippine participation in UN peacekeeping operations, serves as guarantee that no Filipino peacekeeper goes unpunished for misdeeds committed in mission areas.

Finally Mr. President, the Philippines, as one of the largest, if not the largest, contributors of individual police officers to UN peacekeeping operations, could also support calls for the deployment of more female police officers, especially those experienced in handling gender violence cases. We hope that such contribution would help bring about better monitoring, reporting and response to cases of gender violence in conflict areas.

Thank you Mr. President.