

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Moura, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations.

I would like to thank your delegation, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their remarks.

Let me start by commending Ms. Bangura for her excellent work in recent months and for her efforts to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. Portugal welcomes the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149), which identifies current and emerging concerns relating to sexual violence in a number of countries, such as Syria, the Central African Republic, Mali, Libya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We particularly welcome the fact that the report discloses new trends and the use of several forms of sexual violence as a tactic of war against not only women and girls but also men and boys. Other interesting elements set out in the report include the connection between sexual violence and the illicit extraction of natural resources and the connection between sexual violence and the failure of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Moreover, the report gives a clear and comprehensive idea of the intensive follow-up and advocacy work carried out worldwide by the current and former Special Representatives to advance the fight against conflict-related sexual violence.

The Security Council has recognized that the protection of women is a critical priority for peace and security. Resolutions 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) clearly establish the fight against sexual violence in its agenda. The Council has created the necessary tools to obtain reliable and accurate information on sexual violence: a common definition of sexual violence and common methodologies for data collection through a monitoring and reporting mechanism are now used throughout the system. Another promising tool at the disposal of Member States is the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law, and Portugal welcomes the technical cooperation that was provided at the request of national authorities in six countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

National accountability needs to be reinforced, as Member States bear the primary responsibility to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence by strengthening of the capacities of national institutions, in particular health, judicial and social systems. The action of the international community must also be reinforced. The deployment of women protection advisers in the relevant peacekeeping operations, so as to strengthen the prevention of and response to sexual violence, needs to be accelerated in order to ensure that dedicated capacity on sexual violence exists within peacekeeping and political missions. The challenges that have delayed the deployment of such advisers must be overcome. We are encouraged by arrangements that have allowed the deployment of such advisers in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, but we also note that women protection advisers are urgently needed in Mali, Syria and Libya, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General.

All of the information contained in the report is relevant for the Security Council in terms of its Charter-mandated responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The information that has already been collected by the reporting mechanism will make it possible for the Council to have access to "timely, objective, accurate and reliable information" on sexual violence in conflict. With such information, the Council will also be able to take further steps. That should be

understood as a clear message to perpetrators of sexual violence that the Council is ready to apply sanctions or to use all other means at its disposal, including referrals to the International Criminal Court, against perpetrators that have been identified as having committed sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

The Council needs to be consistent in its decisions and reinforce the message that impunity is simply not acceptable, sexual violence is simply not tolerable and there can be no genuine security without women's security.

Let me conclude my statement with a word for the survivors of sexual violence. They are at the centre of our debates. Let us not forget them and the fact that, beyond bringing perpetrators to justice, the international community also needs to afford care and reparation to women and girls and men and boys that have been victims of sexual violence in conflict-related situations.