

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Resolution 1820**  
**Thursday, June 19, 2008**

***Statement by H.E Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly to the United Nations***

May I begin by thanking Secretary Rice for having convened this important meeting on sexual violence in armed conflict situations. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ambassador Khalilzad for his invitation to address the Security Council today.

Today's debate focuses on a security issue that has deep social consequences. As Secretary Rice rightly pointed out in her introductory remarks, the effectiveness of national institutions should be measured by their ability to protect the most vulnerable members of society, particularly women and children. I would like to add, in the same context, that the effectiveness of international institutions should also be measured by the degree of protection they afford to the most vulnerable members of society — women and children — and that applies especially to the United Nations.

During the General Assembly thematic debate on human security, held in May, member States emphasized the importance of more effectively integrating human security perspectives into the peace and security work of the United Nations. That is particularly important as this year we are marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Comprehensive, integrated and people-centred solutions at the crossroads of security, development and human rights must be at the heart of our efforts to fight gender-based crimes against women and girls in conflict situations.

To that end, the Assembly adopted a groundbreaking resolution during that session urging all member States to take special measures to eliminate rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict situations. Among other measures, the resolution calls on the United Nations system to integrate programmes to eliminate violence against women throughout its work.

The Security Council took a principled view of some of those issues in 2000 by adopting resolution 1325 (2000), which, for the first time, specifically addressed the impact of war on women. It also acknowledged that women's contribution to conflict resolution had been undervalued and underutilized.

While some progress has been made in a number of areas covered by the resolution, several reviews have revealed that much stronger and more coordinated efforts are needed to fully implement its provisions.

We all have to do more to prevent human rights violations against women and girls in situations of armed conflict, to do more to punish the perpetrators and to end the impunity of those who commit war crimes.

Armed conflict has a disproportionately negative impact on women. Sexual violence against women is not only an affront to our human dignity but an inherent and grave threat to our human security. When it is authorized and perpetrated as an instrument of war, one cannot express in words the utter indecency of it.

It is my strong belief that women must be guaranteed equal and full participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes and be represented in the structures and institutions born of any peace dividend in order to ensure that it lasts.

The interconnected nature of the issues we are discussing today were highlighted at the General Assembly's recent high-level debate on human trafficking, which also considered aspects of sexual violence against women and girls. Our discussions illustrated that in many instances human trafficking for sexual exploitation is intrinsically linked with conflict situations. Human trafficking thrives against the backdrop of conflict, poverty and discrimination. Members of the General Assembly all committed themselves to do more to put the existing normative framework into practice globally.

I would also like to highlight the General Assembly's work on the rights of the child, which led to the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed

Conflict, and the Security Council's working group on this issue, which demonstrates that together we can effectively tackle issues that span security and human rights.

It is clear that when the General Assembly and the Security Council take a principled stand and increase our visibility and coordination on cross-cutting issues, such as sexual violence in armed conflict situations, the overall effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations is strengthened.

I hope that we can continue to engage in a productive policy dialogue on this and other human security issues that affect our work and our common mission.