

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Kim Sook, Permanent Mission of Republic of Korea to the United Nations.

I would like to thank the United Kingdom leadership for convening this meeting. I appreciate the presence here today of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr. William Hague. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Bangura, for their informative briefings, as well as to Ms. Angelina Jolie and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar for their powerful and moving statements.

Rape, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence in conflict are strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law and can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity and constitutive acts of genocide. Ensuring accountability for those responsible is crucial to eradicating conflict-related sexual violence. However, it is a disturbing historical fact that, in many cases, national and international justice systems have failed to bring perpetrators of such sexual violence to justice. Against that backdrop, my delegation would like to commend the leadership of the United Kingdom in addressing the issue.

We welcome the declaration of the Group of Eight (G-8) on preventing sexual violence in conflict, adopted in April under the United Kingdom presidency of the G-8. As the declaration recognizes, sexual violence represents one of the most serious forms of violation or abuse of international humanitarian law and human rights law, and there should be no safe haven for perpetrators of such crimes.

I would like to underline the following three points. First, we underscore the importance of accountability at the national level. States bear the primary responsibility to protect women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence and bring those responsible to justice. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the stress placed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on national ownership, leadership and responsibility in combating sexual violence as one of her priorities. All States should include the full range of acts of sexual violence in national penal legislation and ensure the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for violations through proper legal and policy frameworks.

We believe that political will is crucial. The lack of adequate national capacity to investigate and prosecute sexual violence may also be one of the main challenges to ensuring accountability for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence. We welcome the fact that the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict has been focusing its efforts on strengthening the capacity of national rule of law and justice actors.

The long-term prevention of sexual violence is equally important. We also commend UN-Women for its increasing contribution to the promotion of gender equality and women's political, social and economic empowerment, as well as their participation in every sector of society.

Secondly, we would like to stress the significance of the international justice mechanism. When national justice systems are unwilling or unable to fulfil their responsibilities, international mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as the ad hoc and mixed tribunals, should play the role of ensuring accountability. The fact that charges of sexual violence are included in nearly every case of investigation and prosecution indicates both the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence and the significant role of the ICC in holding perpetrators of those crimes accountable.

The Security Council should play its role by referring serious sexual violence to the ICC and by adopting targeted and graduated measures of relevant sanctions committees. Furthermore, the Security Council needs to systematically reflect sexual violence in conflict in all relevant country resolutions and ensure the inclusion of specific language on addressing conflict-related sexual violence, including the accelerated and extended deployment of women's protection advisers in all peacekeeping and political mission mandates.

Thirdly, fighting impunity and ensuring accountability should be given critical importance in ceasefire and post-conflict reconstruction processes. Ending impunity is crucial if a society recovering from conflict is to come to terms with the past and to prevent future abuses. Sexual violence should be included in the definition of acts prohibited by ceasefires and in provisions for ceasefire monitoring. Furthermore, crimes of sexual violence need to be excluded from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution processes.

In that context, my delegation would like to stress that delivering justice for victims of sexual violence is not just about holding perpetrators accountable, but also ensures reparative justice. We fully support the recommendation in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) that reparations awarded through judicial or administrative mechanisms be established and made available to victims of sexual violence in conflict.

My delegation welcomes resolution 2106 (2013) adopted today, and commends the leadership of the United States delegation for effectively steering the negotiation process. We believe that the resolution will mark another significant milestone in our difficult but victorious journey towards ending sexual violence and the culture of impunity the world over.

Before closing, my delegation would like to commend the excellent work of Special Representative Bangura and extend its full support to her in fulfilling her mandate. The Republic of Korea will remain committed to fighting conflict-related sexual violence, in cooperation with the international community.