

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mr. Zagaynov Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations.

I, too, would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and Ms. Misaka for their statements and the information they have presented to us on issues of sexual violence in armed conflict.

For almost six years, the Security Council has constantly paid close attention to issues of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Any armed conflict is characterized by a high level of violence in various forms. Sexual violence is one such phenomenon, an abhorrent act that calls for resolute condemnation and severe punishment. This crime is a consequence of the prevailing impunity and, as correctly pointed out in the report (S/2014/181) of Secretary-General, is closely related problems in ensuring security. The work carried out to prevent and eradicate violence must be comprehensive and, above all, aimed at eradicating its sources by settling conflicts and restoring order and security. Combating just the manifestations of sexual violence is unlikely to bring about the desired results.

The prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict and punishing perpetrators should be considered in the context of the whole series of problems associated with conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. That is the balanced approach laid out in resolution 1325 (2000), and it is on that basis that the work to eliminate sexual violence should be based. An important prerequisite for overcoming violence against women is the full participation of women themselves in peace talks and post-conflict reconstruction. The Council should consider the issue of women and peace and security in the context of armed conflict and post-conflict situations. The focus of the Council's attention should be on the most urgent and large-scale armed conflicts and situations of massive and systematic rape and violence. Individual cases of sexual violence, which are criminal acts and not war crimes, should not become the subject of consideration by the Security Council.

We must also avoid duplication of effort in this area by other United Nations entities with relevant competence — for example, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Commission on the Status of Women and UN-Women.

We call on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to act in accordance with her mandate when carrying out her activities and to give priority attention to situations on the agenda of the Security Council, where sexual violence is one of the main issues in the context of the protection of civilians.

Sexual violence in armed conflict is the topic we are considering today. We should avoid broader interpretations of what has been agreed at the intergovernmental level and enshrined in Security Council resolutions — a scope that pertains to armed conflict and post-conflict situations. We believe that the expansive interpretation of the terminology being used, and this issue as a whole, can have a negative influence on the functioning of the Security Council and the United Nations in this area, as well as on the effectiveness of the fight against sexual violence.

Furthermore, we must not forget that in the course of armed conflict, women and children are not subject only to sexual violence; they continue to be victims of killing and maiming, including as a result of terrorist acts, and the indiscriminate or disproportionate use of force. Such crimes in particular often go unpunished or are justified by the inevitability of so-called collateral damage.

Combating sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is impossible without the active involvement of national authorities in the process. The report of the Secretary-General therefore places particular emphasis on the need for national ownership and the leading role and responsibility of States. Measures taken by the United Nations system and civil society should complement the efforts of States.