

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, (Conflict Related Sexual Violence)
23 February 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E Mr. Mashabane, Permanent Representative of South Africa

I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Margot Wallström and to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, for their briefings this morning. Our delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2012/33) and the comments made on behalf of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), specifically the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and security.

South Africa attaches great significance to the subject matter under consideration, and we wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General, the Special Representative and the entire United Nations team that continues to work hard to ensure that this scourge is completely eradicated. We would like to commend the excellent job done by the United Nations and the Special Representative to highlight the challenges of sexual violence in conflict-affected areas. Africa continues to bear the brunt of this evil, given its high share of the number of conflict areas. This scourge has to be completely eradicated sooner than later.

South Africa remains deeply concerned about the continuing trends of sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, in particular the deliberate targeting of civilians, especially children. It is a fact that women and girls are disproportionately affected by the scourge of violence. Over the centuries, women have formed the core of civilization and human advancement. On our continent and in South Africa, women have participated in the gallant struggles against colonialism and oppression as equals, shoulder to shoulder with men, in the struggle for justice, emancipation and equality.

It is therefore a travesty that women are still today subjected to the most degrading and dehumanizing acts, in spite of their violent role in history. We should therefore spare no effort to comprehensively resolve all the outstanding conflicts across the globe in general and on our continent in particular. Those conflicts continue to be a fertile ground for sexual violence, and rape in particular, which is used as a weapon of war.

We have taken note of the fact that the Secretary-General's report for the past year was prepared and compiled after a broad and extensive consultation with the 13-entity network — a fact greatly appreciated by my delegation, given that it has enriched the report by making it one informed by the conditions and experiences on the ground. No doubt it is one of the most comprehensive reports ever prepared on this matter, and it represents to a large extent the great deal of progress in dealing with this scourge. We are particularly pleased that United Nations peacekeeping and political missions, as well as country teams, were primary sources of information for the report. For South Africa that is crucial, because the report is informed by the experiences of people who are at the cold phase.

The Council has done an outstanding job over the past few years to comprehensively address the challenge of conflict-related sexual violence by adopting landmark resolutions aimed at eradicating it. South Africa welcomes the progress that has been made so far in the preparations of the terms of reference for women protection advisers, and we look forward to their early deployment. We are mindful of the limitations that continue to pose a challenge to the reporting of incidents of sexual violence in conflict stricken areas. It is our hope that the countries mentioned in the report will do everything in their power to address all the challenges identified, including bringing the perpetrators to justice and reparations for the victims. South Africa is concerned that African countries continue to constitute the majority of countries where there is an increasing prevalence of conflict-related

sexual violence. We are appalled that the incidents of rape and gang rape increased in the recent conflict that struck Côte d'Ivoire. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, rape, mass rapes and other sexual violence continue unabated in North and South Kivu. That is a matter of great concern to South Africa.

We welcome and fully support the establishment by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) of prosecution support cells to boost the capacity of the Congolese justice system in the investigation of war crimes, crimes against humanity and sexual violence. We hope that all those initiatives will help to bring all the perpetrators to justice and end the culture of impunity.

We welcome the commitments that were made by the Governments of countries of concern during the visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in relation to addressing impunity for sexual crimes and the training of security personnel. We appreciate the work done by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, especially its great work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and South Sudan.

In the same vein, and equally important, are the pre deployment training modules that UN-Women and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have developed. We welcome the modules that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has developed on the protection of civilians and sexual violence with the African Union partners, under the auspices of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. We are of the view that the streamlining of conflict-related sexual violence across all peacekeeping training will go a long way in the efforts to comprehensively address and eradicate that evil. We would like to encourage all United Nations agencies and departments to continue to work together in an integrated and coordinated manner to effectively implement such training. We hope that we will soon see the fruits of those concerted efforts.

We are pleased with the development of a framework of early warning signs specific to conflict related sexual violence by UN-Women, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the broader United Nations system. That will assist a great deal towards preventing those heinous crimes. We equally appreciate the work of the Department of Political Affairs in producing the United Nations guidelines for mediators on addressing conflict-related sexual violence in ceasefire and peace agreements. South Africa supports the inclusion of provisions dealing with conflict-related sexual violence in ceasefire and peace agreements, which must have a direct linkage with the increasing role of women in conflict resolution and management.

South Africa is mindful of the fact that, if all those efforts and initiatives are to succeed, a great deal of resources and funds are required. The international community and the United Nations must do all they can to ensure that resources do not stand in the way of the implementation of all the strategies, initiatives and efforts for the complete eradication of conflict-related sexual violence. We support the call contained in the 2010 report on women's participation in peacebuilding (S/2010/466) for the allocation of at least 15 per cent of United Nations-managed funds for post-conflict peacebuilding projects to advance gender equality, to empower women and to address women's specific needs in peacebuilding contexts, which includes the prevention of and response to sexual violence.

South Africa supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General that the Security Council increase pressure on the perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, that it utilize all means at its disposal, and that, in this matter, it fully support the use of referrals to the International Criminal Court. For us, there is no gainsaying the fact that the International Criminal Court has strengthened the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern against women and girls. We continue to stand ready to work with other members of the Council and the United Nations

in general to enhance efforts against impunity and to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. The perpetrators of these evil acts should no longer be allowed to remain in uniform, roam the streets, sit at negotiating tables, continue to occupy positions of authority or command armed forces.

We fully concur with the recommendation that the Security Council should systematically reflect conflict-related sexual violence in the authorization and renewal of peacekeeping mandates and the renewal of special political missions. In that respect, South Africa has always supported the call for the deployment of women protection advisers to peacekeeping and political missions in order to coordinate the implementation of conflict-related sexual violence.

For our part, South Africa continues to increase the number of women deployed in United Nations peacekeeping missions. About 45 per cent of the troops we contribute to the United Nations are women, and 10 per cent of them have played leadership and commanding roles. We will continue to do our part and to contribute to international efforts to address the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence.

In conclusion, we support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in line with the mandate, and we want to assure her of our continued support.