

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary General the United Nations.*

I thank you, Foreign Secretary Hague, for presiding over this meeting during the United Kingdom's presidency of the Security Council. I commend the leadership and efforts of the United Kingdom in bringing key international support and momentum to the crucial fight against conflict-related sexual violence.

I also welcome the tireless work and advocacy of Ms. Angelina Jolie. For years, she has been a voice for the millions of people who are forced to flee their homes due to conflict, and now for the many survivors of wartime rape whose bodies have been used as battlegrounds.

I am pleased, too, that we are joined by Jane Adong Anywar, a lawyer and civil society activist who works to bring justice to victims of sexual violence in conflict. It is through the efforts of people like Ms. Anywar that we can end impunity for this crime and ensure that survivors get the legal redress they deserve.

Last month, I briefed the Council on my visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Council will recall that I visited the Heal Africa hospital in Goma, where I met women and girls who had been raped and maimed by armed groups on all sides of the conflict. Many had a condition called traumatic fistula. In plain terms, they had been torn inside. Experiencing great pain and often unable to control bladder and bowels, they are disabled and often shunned by society. Hospitals such as Heal Africa in Goma, and Panzi in Bukavu help rehabilitate such women. They mend their wounds and provide skills that can give them self-worth and a source of income; but they cannot protect them. That is a job for the Congolese authorities and the international community, in particular the Council. As we drove into the hospital the streets were lined with women. They were angry and they had a clear message: no more impunity; no more war; give us peace. They want us to hear and act on their appeal.

Sexual violence occurs wherever conflict rages. It has devastating effects on survivors and destroys the social fabric of whole communities. While women and girls suffer disproportionately from these vicious crimes, men and boys are also targeted. Sexual violence is a crime under international human rights law and a threat to international peace and security. When used as a weapon of war, it can significantly exacerbate conflict and seriously hamper reconciliation.

The international community, through resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), has put in place a solid framework for responding to conflict-related sexual violence. The mechanisms established enable us to carry out global advocacy through my Special Representative, in collaboration with the United Nations Action Network against Sexual Violence in Conflict, which she leads. Today's draft resolution sends yet another strong signal to perpetrators that their acts will no longer be tolerated. They will be held accountable.

Preventing sexual violence in conflict is our joint responsibility. It must be part of our work in many areas, from peacekeeping and political missions to mediation, ceasefire agreements, security sector reform, justice sector reform and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations system is committed to "Delivering as One", to end the culture of impunity that prevails in relation to sexual violence. On behalf of the Action Network, UN-Women and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have developed the first-ever scenario-based training programme for peacekeepers. A senior women's protection adviser will be deployed shortly within the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan to join those already in place, while others are soon to be deployed in the

Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Somalia.

The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict is an important tool for strengthening national justice systems and legal frameworks. It has provided technical advice to authorities in the Central African Republic, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Somalia and South Sudan. UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund are leading the United Nations system in coordinating the provision of services for survivors. And the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN-Women are providing expertise for investigating and documenting gender-based violence.

Along with leadership and access to justice, understanding the extent of the problem is essential for effectively protecting women and girls.

I have consistently emphasized the importance of national ownership in preventing sexual violence. I call on all leaders at the highest political level to voice their unequivocal support for our cause and to follow up with deeds. That includes apprehending and prosecuting perpetrators to deter further crimes. It means helping survivors by improving medical, psychological, social and judicial assistance. And it entails providing the necessary resources to support the work of my Special Representative and other mechanisms.

Those who hold power and influence have a special duty to step forward and be part of a global coalition of champions determined to break this evil. Sexual violence is a vile, whenever and wherever it occurs. It must be exposed and met with the anger and action that it deserves.

I count on the Council's sustained leadership to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and survivors receive justice and support.