

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mr. Mashabane, Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations.

Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate and for giving us the opportunity to participate. At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181).

My delegation acknowledges the significant gains recorded in the past decade towards building political momentum in the fight against the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. Undoubtedly, that has contributed to a more focused, coherent and integrated approach across the United Nations system in addressing this complex and persistent challenge.

The recent report of the Secretary-General warrants serious consideration, given the overwhelming evidence that sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict remains systemic and widespread in many parts of the world. We are conscious that the consequences of those egregious crimes are devastating for affected communities.

While the report of the Secretary-General strongly underscores the need for a comprehensive, multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional framework approach to address the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, we concur with the Secretary-General's observation that national ownership, leadership and responsibility are key in the prevention of sexual violence. Ultimately, Member States bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for preventing and addressing such crimes.

In the broader framework of prevention, we have long advocated for the explicit referencing of sexual violence in conflict in all the relevant country-specific resolutions, as well as in the authorizations and renewals of the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions.

We recognize the valuable contribution of the five-point priority agenda of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict as a strategy to address sexual violence in conflict. However, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General, we believe that priority must be given to fostering national ownership, leadership and responsibility to ensure sustainability.

My delegation commends the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in enhancing the capacity-building of civilian and military justice systems to address sexual violence. We believe, however, that significantly more needs to be done by Member States, the United Nations system and the relevant entities in supporting national efforts by States to increase women's participation, leadership and expertise in the rule of law and transitional justice, as well as in advancing accountability measures for serious offences committed against the victims of sexual violence.

My delegation is of the view that civil society and women's organizations are important partners in efforts aimed at preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence and in providing victims and survivors with information and support, towards facilitating their access to health services, legal assistance, basic services and livelihood assistance.

In that regard, Member States, and key United Nations bodies such as the Peacebuilding Commission, UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme, working with United Nations country teams and peace missions, have a critical role to play in supporting and capacitating the development of civil society and women's organizations at community and local levels. The value of engaging women from different communities in identifying early conflict warning signs, mediating community conflicts, and leading campaigns to prevent sexual and gender-based violence is well documented.

In conclusion, every effort must be made to end impunity by perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. My delegation therefore affirms its support for the inclusion of sexual violence in the

definition of acts prohibited during ceasefires, including the exclusion of perpetrators of sexual violence from amnesty provisions.

The Security Council must also include measures that bring pressure to bear on perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, especially on individuals and parties through the adoption of specific measures, including specific and time-bound protection commitments by all the relevant actors to an armed conflict.

While there is value in developing monitoring mechanisms by the Security Council to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the relevant resolutions, greater participation by women in negotiation and peacemaking processes will allow for greater inclusivity and incorporation of gender perspectives reflective of the interests and concerns of women, thereby contributing to the sustainability of peace efforts.