

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

Statement by Mr. Govender, Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations.

My delegation would like to thank the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council for convening this important open debate. We would also like to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for her commitment and efforts in addressing these egregious crimes.

While the Security Council has adopted the requisite resolutions to address those crimes, including resolution 2106 (2013) today, full and effective implementation of the key resolutions underpinning the women, peace and security agenda is critical to closing the existing protection gaps. The Secretary-General's report (S/2013/335) correctly alludes to a systemic United Nations response to that problem. However, we cannot agree more with the Secretary-General's observation that Member States bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

We concur with the five-point priority agenda of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, but we believe that priority must be given to fostering national ownership, leadership and responsibility in addressing sexual violence in conflict, thereby ensuring its sustainability. The role of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict becomes crucial in enhancing the capacity-building of civilian and military justice systems to address sexual violence in conflict afflicted communities.

The technical assessment missions of peacekeeping operations should, as a matter of standard practice, include an agenda adviser whose primary task must be situational awareness, analysis and recommendations regarding the threat of or acts of sexual violence in conflict. As part of a systemic response, multidimensional peacekeeping missions should incorporate a public awareness campaign at the field level that encourages community involvement in monitoring and reporting of the threat of or actual incidences of all forms of sexual violence.

The Secretary-General's report highlights lessons that could be learned from security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes that went wrong in specific peacekeeping missions. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Security Council and other relevant United Nations entities should take stock of those lessons and ensure that subsequent mandates, renewals and transitions involving security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes prevent any escalation of threats to vulnerable communities.

While scenario-based training for peacekeepers is essential to enhancing operational readiness and prevention, it can never be a panacea for eliminating sexual violence in conflict. The reach of the national Government throughout its territories and its ability to exercise control over those territories through its national security apparatus, including law enforcement and military capabilities, will always remain integral to preventing and arresting sexual violence.

We support the recommendations of the Secretary-General as contained in his recent report. We believe, however, that the effective implementation of resolution 1960 (2010) will require greater involvement of women in conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding processes. While there is value in the Security Council's developing monitoring mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the provisions of resolution 1960 (2010), the greater involvement of women in negotiation and peacemaking processes brings with it a greater infusion of gender concerns and interests in the resolution process.

In closing, every effort must be made to end impunity by perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. Making parties live up to their commitments in peace agreements, which include the prohibition of sexual violence in such agreements, is certainly one of the tools that must be utilized with fervour. 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 targeted and graduated measures, as well as for the Security Council to immediately and unambiguously pronounce on those acts as and when perpetrated.