

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

Statement by Mr. Eler, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations.

I would like to thank the United Kingdom for convening this very important debate. I also thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, the Special Envoy of the High Commissioner, Ms. Jolie, and Ms. Anywar of the NGO Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice for their insightful statements.

In the twenty-first century, sexual violence is, sadly, still widespread, particularly in armed conflict, including its early stages and aftermath. Unfortunately, in conflicts, national judicial and security systems are often characterized by incapacity, leading to a culture of impunity. Legal codes on sexual violence do not exist or cannot be implemented. An absence of efficient criminal procedures and institutional capacity is common. Even when laws and judicial and security institutions are in place, a selective application of laws and a lack of accountability often prevail. As a result, victims are discouraged from seeking civil remedies, and a culture of impunity prevails.

To address this problem, comprehensive solutions should be sought by both ensuring the supremacy of the rule of law and by building judicial and security institutions. Gaps in legislation and implementation must be addressed. Criminal responsibility must be increased. Impunity must be ended both for perpetrators and those in the chain of command. The investigative capabilities of national institutions must be increased. Additional services such as legal support, protection for survivors of violence and training should be put in place. This is quite a formidable list of tasks.

It takes personnel, resources and time to end the culture of impunity. The continued support of the international community is essential. Punishment for the crime often serves as the most important deterrent. To address sexual violence during conflicts and ensure that these crimes can be prosecuted in the post-conflict phase, the necessary documentation and evidence must be gathered while the conflict is ongoing. The United Nations, other international organizations, humanitarian agencies and civil society have an important task in this respect.

The Security Council deserves special credit for connecting the concepts of sexual violence and impunity to international peace and security, passing numerous resolutions and addressing the issue in various meetings. We also welcome today's adoption of resolution 2106 (2013). The Council's efforts help strongly convey the message that sexual violence and impunity are unacceptable.

I would also like to commend the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for its valuable work. Acting in close partnership with all relevant stakeholders, including national judicial and security institutions, international and regional organizations, humanitarian agencies, civil society and the private sector, the United Nations should continue its technical assistance to countries suffering from conflict. International justice mechanisms are essential, especially when sexual violence is used as a war tactic in the form of systematic rape and forced pregnancies. In addition, especially in post-conflict set-ups, their work complements that of national systems in the fight against the culture of impunity.

I would like to touch upon three more concepts that we deem necessary when addressing impunity. The first is reparations. They are a form of transitional gender justice and contribute to truth and reconciliation.

Secondly, monitoring and reporting on incidents of sexual violence is important, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2013/149). We extend our full support to the endeavours

of the United Nations in this area. In this respect, as a neighbouring country, Turkey took note with concern of the findings of the recent report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. In that regard, access should be granted to the commission to conduct on-site investigations with respect to the allegations of all human rights violations in Syria, including sexual violence against women.

Finally, raising awareness at the local, national, regional and international levels is key to combating impunity. Many remain silent before sexual violence, in the fear of being targeted, attacked, stigmatized or shamed. We must ensure that raising one's voice against this despicable crime becomes the norm, rather than the exception.

The elimination of the root causes of conflict is the best way to prevent sexual violence and address impunity. The establishment or restoration of the rule of law, good governance and socio-economic development is essential for sustainable solutions.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Secretary- General, the Member States and all relevant United Nations bodies, in addition to all relevant stakeholders at the local, national, regional and global levels that have prioritized the issue of sexual violence against women in conflict. Special thanks go to Special Representative Bangura, whose exemplary dedication to fighting sexual violence in conflicts, including by combating impunity, we continue to support.