

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

Statement by Ambassador Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Permanent Representative of the UK Mission, to the United Nations

Thank you Mr. President, I join others in thanking SRSG Margot Wallstrom and DPKO Herve Ladsous, for their informative briefings and, Amina Megheirbi for her moving words on behalf of the NGO Working Group. The United Kingdom welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence. We wholeheartedly support the work and the mandate of Margot Wallstrom.

Mr. President, I would like to make three points;

Firstly I would like to commend SRSG Wallstrom for the good work that she has done to raise the profile of this issue, including fighting against impunity. We welcome her concerted efforts in tackling this issue, leading to a more co-ordinated response from the UN system as she has set out this morning. UN Action has played an important part in implementing the monitoring analysis and reporting arrangements (MARA). Ms Wallstrom has also worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of nongovernmental and civil society organisations are heard.

Secondly, we welcome the efforts towards greater accountability, and an end to impunity. The UN monitoring and reporting mechanisms provide reliable, objective and evidence based information on conflict-related sexual violence against women, men, girls and boys. Under Resolution 1960, the Security Council can now hold to account parties credibly suspected of committing acts of rape or other forms of sexual violence. We note these parties listed for the first time and support appropriate action being taken against those responsible for these terrible acts.

It is important that this Council takes into account information on conflict-related sexual violence when considering post-conflict situations and other situations of concern. However, conflict related sexual violence is not confined to countries on the Security Council agenda as we see incidents or patterns occur in other settings. The SRSG must be able to address conflict related sexual violence wherever a pattern or trend exists as an early warning sign of conflict. These crimes must be reported, addressed and punished and the survivors must be treated with dignity throughout the reporting process.

We recognize the good work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law. They support member states to strengthen the rule of law as well as institutional safeguards against impunity, by working with them to improve rule of law processes and ensuring that those committing sexual violence are brought to justice. It is not until impunity has been combated that the perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence are brought to account, that justice will have been done. All parties to conflict must learn that it is the perpetrator and not the survivor who will pay the price.

Finally, we welcome the development of a framework of early-warning signs specific to conflict-related sexual violence, as well as the ambition to integrate this analysis into existing and emerging early-warning and prevention systems. Early-warning and prevention systems are vital tools in both preventing and in tackling conflict related sexual violence.

Mr. President, Rape is increasingly used as a tactic of war and the Security Council should be united in condemnation of it and steadfast in support of the crucial work of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence. The adoption of Resolution 1960, the appointment of Ms Wallstrom, the establishment of her Good Offices alongside the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the work of Women Protection Advisors all contribute to preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence and thereby to international peace and stability.

We firmly believe that the Council needs to sustain and build on this work. For that reason the United Kingdom is disappointed that this Council has not yet been able to agree a Presidential Statement condemning conflict-related sexual violence. It sends a depressing message to the world at large, and in particular to victims and survivors that on the occasion of this debate the Council is not yet been able to agree a public statement on impunity; on prevention and early warning; on follow-up to Resolution 1960 over the last year; and – crucially – on the excellent work of Margot Wallstrom.

We trust that intensive and urgent efforts will continue amongst Council members to agree a public position on these important issues and that all delegations will demonstrate the necessary commitment, sensitivity and vision to make such a statement possible. The United Kingdom will certainly be active in any such efforts. And finally Mr. President, we have noticed a disturbing trend recently, for certain members of the Security Council to argue that they do not feel bound by resolutions adopted when they were not on the Council. Security Council resolutions are of course legally binding on all UN Member States and no Member State can distance themselves from resolutions or undermine their implementation whether or not they were not present in the Council when those resolutions were adopted. Thank you.