

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mr. Le Hoai Trung, Permanent Mission of Vietnam to the United Nations.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and my own country, Viet Nam.

We commend the Nigerian presidency for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security with a focus on sexual violence in armed conflict. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181) and we thank him and his Special Representative for their briefings to the Council.

Sexual violence in both armed conflict and post-conflict situations continues to affect and threaten the well-being of women and girls in many regions of the world. Indeed, sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations leaves lasting scars for nations, communities and, above all, its victims, and may have a significant bearing on the durability of peace and prospects for sustainable development.

ASEAN strongly condemns all forms of violence against women and girls, in particular sexual violence. We condemn the use of rape and other sexual violence as a tactic of war to deliberately target civilian populations. ASEAN therefore welcomes the important actions taken by the Council to address that atrocious crime, including its landmark resolutions 1325 (2000), as well as subsequent relevant resolutions and presidential statements. Those actions, together with the enormous efforts by the entire United Nations and the international community, have helped raise awareness about the catastrophic impact of sexual violence in armed conflict and post conflict situations, which needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

In that connection, ASEAN is of the view that the international community, with the United Nations at the centre, must redouble its efforts to address the three interrelated dimensions — namely, the prevention of sexual violence, care for its victims and the empowerment of women.

First, the prevention of armed conflict-related sexual violence must be addressed at its root cause, that is, the prevention of armed conflicts itself. Mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution must be implemented. States must promote the rule of law, justice, good governance, democracy, poverty eradication, sustainable development, gender equality and respect for and protection of human rights at national and international levels as the means of tackling the root causes of conflicts.

Secondly, breaking the silence and raising awareness are essential to the prevention of sexual violence and the protection of victims. Political discussion and initiatives at international and regional levels are of crucial importance to send the message of intolerance toward sexual violence, and that must combined with measures aimed at raising awareness at the grass-roots level. Therefore, eliminating sexual violence requires not only sanctioning perpetrators, but transforming the mindset of societies and the underlying economic and social conditions that allow sexual violence to thrive.

Thirdly, victims of sexual violence must be provided with multisectoral assistance and services tailored to their specific needs. They must be protected against stigmatization and exclusion, and given the opportunity and capability to re-engage and reintegrate with their communities.

Fourthly, the full and equal political, social and economic participation of women is key to addressing sexual violence at its roots. The inclusion of women and their priorities in all aspects of a peace process is crucial. Attention should also be paid to both civilian women and those having served in the armed forces or been involved in military activities during their reintegration efforts.

Lastly, while States bear the primary responsibility for preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence, the United Nations system has a special role to play, as mandated by its Member States. ASEAN recognizes the constructive role of civil society, the media and other stakeholders, many of whom are working hard to protect the rights and interests of women under difficult situations, and encourages them to work closely with States and the United Nations system in those common endeavours.

ASEAN represents a region where women have a long tradition of playing an important role in national economic and political life, during conflicts, in conflict resolution, as well as in post-conflict national reconstruction.

ASEAN is strongly committed to the prevention and fight against sexual violence, particularly sexual violence in armed conflict. All ASEAN member States are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and have supported all the relevant Security Council resolutions and presidential statements related to women and peace and security, including those on sexual violence in the context of armed conflict.

At the regional level, ASEAN has established the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission of Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. Initiatives like Stop Violence Against Women and workshops on women, security and peace in ASEAN are also important steps undertaken by ASEAN to raise awareness on the issue.

Much remains to be done to address the challenges faced by women and girls in armed conflicts, as well as in post-conflict situations. ASEAN reaffirms our strong support and commitment to the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions to end sexual violence whenever and wherever it occurs.