

SECURITY COUNCIL

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Statement by
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In connection with the agenda item
"Women and peace and security"

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Madame President,

At the outset, allow me to thank you for convening this important debate on such a pressing issue. My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, and President of the General Assembly for their statements, and especially to the former Force Commander of MONUC for sharing insights from his personal experience and helping us to better understand the challenges before us.

Eight years ago, the Council adopted the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), which for the first time addressed the impact of war on women. Israel continues to support the full implementation of this resolution. While progress has been made in some aspects, much more work needs to be done. One aspect in particular, which is the basis of today's debate, calls on parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and emphasizes the responsibility of states to put an end to impunity.

While sexual violence in armed conflict has occurred throughout history, brutal and systematic rapes have become increasingly commonplace in some conflict and post-conflict. Moreover, sexual violence as a weapon of war is now perpetuated with almost universal impunity in some conflicts. These actions not only constitute gross violations of human rights, they also undermine confidence in peace processes and raise huge barriers to reconciliation.

Madame President,

While the international community has recognized that sexual violence can amount to a war crime, crimes against humanity, or constitutive acts with respect to genocide, numerous challenges remain to ending sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

One particular obstacle is the reluctance of victims to come forward. Survivors and victims of sexual and gender-based violence often feel ostracized, as they are forced to assume guilt and shame. This silence not only harms the victims and their families, but also leads to faulty statistics. Sources in the field confirm that indeed the number of incidents of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is greatly underreported. Hence, victims must be empowered to reclaim their human dignity. States should enforce the rule of law, bring the perpetrators to justice, and end the cycle of impunity.

Similarly, a change in societal attitudes and norms regarding sexual violence must be brought about, beginning with, as just mentioned, bringing the perpetrators to justice. Ending impunity will also encourage victims to come forward to seek justice and rehabilitation. At the same time, we must educate at the earliest stages on the rights, dignity, and worth of every human being, no matter their gender.

At the recent Wilton Park conference, recommendations were made for sexual violence to be viewed as a security issue, and the international community should identify the circumstances under which sexual violence is a threat to national and international peace

and security. In this context, the Council can play a greater role in ensuring that peacekeeping mandates specifically refer to the prevention of sexual violence, that peacekeepers are appropriately trained and informed about sexual violence, and that sanctions and other tools are used against perpetrators. In this regard, my delegation fully supports the Secretary-General's call for peacekeepers to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Indeed, resolution 1804 of 31 March 2008, which imposed a travel ban and asset freeze on individuals in the DRC who commit serious violations of international law including sexual violence against children, is a poignant example of how the Council can act more effectively. OCHA reported more than 32,000 registered cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence in the DRC province of South Kivu alone.

Lastly, we must consider not only the effects of sexual violence on the victims, but equally on the children borne of mass rape, sexual slavery, and sexual exploitation. The impact of armed conflict on children borne of rape and exploitation has both economic, health, and social implications that must be addressed.

Madame President,

Sexual violence is not an inevitable outcome of conflict. It can be stopped. States, regional bodies, non-governmental organizations, and even individuals each have their own roles to play in seeing an end to this detestable practice.

The Council, in particular, can focus reporting on sexual violence and seek to fully implement SC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. To this extent, my delegation welcomes and is pleased to cosponsor the resolution currently before this Council. Israel, for its part, pledges to continue to fully implement resolution 1325 and work to promote women's rights in all of its political and development work. Doing so, in concert with global efforts, will help to build and sustain an international commitment to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict.

Thank you, Madame President.