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**Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Le Luong Minh,
Permanent Representative of Viet Nam,
at U.N. Security Council Debate on Women, Peace and Security: Sexual
Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict
New York, 19 June 2008**

Madam President,

At the outset, I would like to thank you and the US Delegation for convening this important debate on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict as a follow-up to Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, an issue to which my country attaches great importance. I would also like to thank H.E. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing to the Council.

Madam President,

Commitments to resolve the issue of sexual violence against women are contained in major documents such as the World Summit Outcome Document, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Right of the Child. That together with the General Assembly's adoption of Resolution 62/134 on "*eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations*" and the Secretary-General's launch this year of a multi-year global campaign to end violence against women manifest the concern of UN Member States about the widespread of this type of inhumane acts against the "better half" of humankind and their determination to tackle it.

My Delegation is deeply concerned about the grave sexual violence in many conflict areas, which continues to occur despite repeated strong condemnation and calls for parties concerned to take measures to prevent and put an end to such acts whose consequences are not only women and girls' personal sufferings but very often also the breakdown of their families and the spread of contagious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which adversely affect whole communities and their

post-conflict reconstruction processes. The consequences are much more severe when victims are under-age girls.

Madam President,

Viet Nam holds the view that the most effective way to protect women and girls from sexual violence, including sexual violence in armed conflict, is to empower women and girls, help them understand their fundamental rights and raise their awareness and capacity to protect themselves. We fully endorse the women empowerment and advancement measures inscribed in the Beijing Platform for Action. As sexual violence, including sexual violence in armed conflict situations, has been a major topic intensively debated at other pertinent U.N. bodies, it is important to enhance the efficiency of those existing mechanisms and improve coordination and cooperation between the Security Council and these bodies while avoiding duplication of their work. The inter-agency initiative "United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict" should serve as a tool to enhance such coordination. At the same time, we must make sure that any new mechanism to be established will be given careful consideration so as not to create unnecessary administrative and financial burdens for Member States and the U.N. agencies. I wish to further emphasize that States bear the primary responsibility to protect their own civilians and deal with violence against them, including sexual violence. As far as peacekeeping missions are concerned, we support the recommendation contained in the draft resolution presented for adoption today by the Council that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group and relevant States to develop and implement appropriate training programs for all peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel deployed by the United Nations in the context of missions as mandated by the Council to help them better prevent, recognize and respond to sexual violence and other forms of violence against civilians. This and the empowerment of women and girls are essential measures of prevention, which is always more effective and less costly than cure.

I thank you, Madam President!