

Statement by Deputy Permanent Representative, Olivier Nduhungirehe, at the UN Security Council open debate on Women, Peace and Security

Madam President,

Let me join others in thanking you for organizing this important open debate. I also thank Ms Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Ms Hamsatu Allamin of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their respective statements earlier today.

In recent years, Madam President, the International community, especially the UN Security Council has, quite rightly, directed considerable energy to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Unfortunately, as we gather here today, one year has passed since the kidnapping of 276 girls from a school in the Nigerian town of Chibok. Today, of the many terrifying stories emerging from the Daesh-occupied Iraq and Syria, the violence directed towards women is perhaps the most difficult to contemplate. The United Nations last month estimated that Daesh has forced some 1,500 women, girls and boys into sexual slavery, which is unacceptable. In the same vein, we also remain in solidarity with affected families of the victims of the recent attacks at Garissa University in Kenya, a majority of which were women.

All these crimes, like many others, present a particularly egregious example of the use of sexual violence in terrorist activities; and are a testimony that conflict-related sexual violence is one of the most urgent challenges for the affected Governments and communities, and is also a serious threat to international peace and security. While the leadership and responsibility on the part of the affected Governments is critical to tackling this issue, with the support of the international community, we believe that the focus should now be on our collective efforts to convert the political commitments into concrete prevention on the ground.

Rwanda once again condemns all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide, especially in conflict and post-conflict zones. We believe that, as previously stated in this Council, sexual violence in conflict, shall now be qualified as “*sexual terrorism*”.

Madam President,

Now that sexual violence has also spilled over in countries that are not in conflicts, clarifications should be set on measures deployed both in the situation of conflict and that of non-conflict. In the conflict zone, we believe that protection of women and girls should be given a priority by ensuring that we take full measures, in particular to provide more effective protection to the civilian population at risk, create the conditions for humanitarian assistance that remains hampered; increase female peacekeepers and Gender protection advisors in all UN Missions; and conduct investigations on violations and abuses by all parties.

We should all send a unified message to remind those responsible that acts of sexual violence can't be tolerated. Perpetrators must face justice; and the culture of impunity enjoyed by some non-state actors should be shattered. Some of the groups enjoying impunity are those who committed these types of atrocities during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and continue such practices today in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); under the name of *Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda* (FDLR).

On this particular issue, it is regrettable to see that, as Rwanda commemorates for the 21st time the genocide against the Tutsi, the international community, which was quick to neutralize other armed groups in eastern DRC, has turned a blind eye to their heinous activities, and continue to offer them a soft landing. If this trend continues, not only FDLR sexual violence campaigns but also its destabilizing tactics will have long-lasting, devastating impacts in the DRC and the region.

Madam President,

In a non-conflict situation, we believe that national security and justice institutions should strengthen their response in addressing sexual violence; including awareness raising and education, strengthening of security institutions to detect acts of terror; effective boarder control measures, among other things. Furthermore, ending impunity for those who commit sexual violence should be our collective effort and goal. In the same

line, we believe that the Security Council should ensure that all country-specific reports and mandate renewals evaluate the level of protection and promotion of women's human rights, as enumerated in several Council resolutions. We call on the established UN Team of Experts on Rule of Law and Sexual Violence to support national institutions in discharging their duties.

I shall conclude, Madam President, by recalling that defeating sexual violence in conflict should include addressing root causes of conflicts and creating institutions that fulfil their constitutional duties. Moreover, a successful reform of the rule of law in conflict-stricken countries will largely depend on the smooth demobilization of the various militias run by warlords. With this being said, let me pay tribute to a committed Secretary-general and to his tireless Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their action and achievements in fighting sexual violence in conflict.

I thank you.