

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

**8234**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 16 April 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of Spain, Ms. Bassols Delgado:**

We align ourselves with the statements delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

As we do every year, we are meeting once again to address a problem as old, and yet as current, as sexual violence in conflict. The Council has developed a vast regulatory corpus in the area, and this may be one of the topics of our open debates that Member States agree on most readily. So what is still preventing the effective implementation of resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law?

From time to time it is suggested that the women and peace and security agenda and the issue of sexual violence in conflict do not belong at the centre of the Council's activity. The prevalence and consequences of such issues are underestimated. Nevertheless, the fact that we are witnessing worrying patterns of sexual violence in a recent and rapidly unfolding humanitarian crisis such as that affecting Myanmar's Rohingya population confirms once again that this agenda represents a central challenge to international peace and security.

This paradigm shift in the classic concept of security should therefore have immediate practical consequences. Spain is grateful to the Peruvian presidency for organizing this open debate in connection with the prevention efforts on the United Nations agenda.

We appreciate the commitment of the Deputy Secretary General and of Special Representative Pramila Patten and the contribution and courage of Ms. Razia Sultana in particular. Testimonies like hers are vital to preventing the normalization of sexual violence as an inevitable consequence of war. Much has been said in this debate on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. I would like to add some thoughts and proposals.

With regard to root causes, who are the primary victims of sexual violence in conflict situations? In a majority of cases they are women and girls who are economically and politically marginalized. That is true whether we are speaking of the women and girls of the Central African Republic, those in Kivu, the Kasais or Tanganyika in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Yazidis in Iraq or the Rohingya in Myanmar, where there has even been talk of ethnic cleansing. We must address the root causes — inequality and the absence of women's empowerment and participation — and we must respond to

early warnings. The Council has the necessary tools if it chooses to use them — the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, peace operations' mandates, the work of women protection counsellors, and sanctions, to name a few. I therefore urge Council members to address the issue of sexual violence in the context of their next visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Spain believes that we must make the fight against sexual violence in conflict a priority in every context. We observe how sexual violence is sometimes a factor in forced displacements in places such as Colombia, Iraq and Syria. The risk does not disappear in refugee camps, and fear of sexual assault prevents many displaced people from returning to their communities. The case of the Rohingya is particularly worrisome. We believe that the negotiations on the global compact on refugees would provide a good opportunity for addressing sexual violence in those contexts. Let us take advantage of that opportunity and those negotiations.

Resolution 2331 (2016) recognizes the nexus between sexual violence and human trafficking during conflicts. It also explores the use of sexual violence as a terrorism tactic employed by certain groups and includes it among their possible sources of financing. We find it surprising, as many representatives have pointed out today, that to date no member of Da'esh or Boko Haram has been prosecuted for sexual assault. Nor have we made progress in acknowledging the victims of sexual violence as victims of terrorism or conflict in such contexts.

We must fight stigmatization. The fear of ostracism is even greater when the victim is a man or a boy, and is exacerbated by the fact that many countries do not see men as possible victims of sexual violence. We therefore suggest that this perspective be taken into account in cooperation projects and humanitarian assistance. That was one of the topics addressed at the recent meeting in Berlin of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, which my country established in 2016 and which is chaired by Germany this year. The meeting also included a specific session on accountability for crimes of sexual violence as a central element in preventing conflicts.

In order to achieve implementation of the resolutions on sexual violence in conflict, the specialized knowledge of the expert panels of the Sanctions Committees, mediators and negotiators of any peace process, the military, the United Nations Police and the humanitarian actors is essential. The Security Council can and must do much more in that area, for example by including specific listing criteria on sexual violence in all sanctions regimes and ensuring subsequent follow-up. In the area of training, Spain has worked to strengthen guidance for its security-sector personnel.

We also provide such training to other countries, such as Palestine and Colombia, and contribute to the United Nations initiative against sexual violence in conflict among the other projects outlined in our second national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which includes specific measures to combat sexual violence, including in the humanitarian field.

Finally, impunity today breeds impunity tomorrow. It must be addressed through mechanisms for improving the preservation of evidence, which require specialized knowledge. The prosecution of two landmark cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the judgment of the International Criminal

Court in the case of Bosco Ntaganda, not only strengthens the victims' trust in justice but also deters possible perpetrators.

The United Nations must lead by example. I propose that we all work to better implement the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations on sexual exploitation and abuse and that we prevent and fight sexual violence, the most silent crime in armed conflicts. We owe that to the thousands of victims who have suffered and continue to live with the consequences.