

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Tanin, Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations.

I would like to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We wish you every success in leading the work of the Council during your presidency and thank your delegation for convening today's debate on an issue of crucial importance. We are grateful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and to his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their briefings this morning. We also take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Bangura on her appointment and to commend her for the great determination she has shown in carrying out her task.

Armed conflicts leave a devastating effect on societies around the world. Violence breeds more violence. Undoubtedly, women often bear the brunt of the many destructive consequences of war and strife. In that regard, sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts remains pervasive, which is a devastating reality that has yet to be resolved and one requiring steadfast efforts at all levels.

In adopting resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), the Security Council sent the clear message that sexual violence would not be tolerated and that ending sexual violence was essential for maintaining international peace and security. All States have the moral and legal responsibility to uphold the rights of all citizens, including women, and to protect them from sexual violence.

Protecting and promoting the rights of the Afghan people has been the cornerstone of all our efforts to build a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Central to those efforts is enabling women to regain their historical role as proactive citizens in Afghan society. Afghanistan is pursuing the vigorous implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) through our national priority programme. We have also launched our national action plan for the women of Afghanistan as a 10-year blue print that contains specific and time-bound benchmarks for progress in various areas. As the implementation of the action plan continues apace, we are confident that we will realize our vision of seeing Afghan women thrive and be empowered in all sectors of society — the social, political and economic.

Afghanistan is fully committed to preventing all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence. In that regard, in 2009, we enacted a law on the elimination of violence against women, which provided for stronger judicial means to combat violence. Throughout the country, perpetrators of such crimes are increasingly being held accountable where such crimes are committed, with their cases being prosecuted before the law.

In reference to an observation made in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149), we wish to state with full confidence that the Government and the people of Afghanistan do not and will not tolerate impunity against any form of human rights violation. Together with our judicial authorities, the Afghan National Security Forces are working diligently to uphold law and order in all areas of the country. As we move forward, we are confident that our efforts will continue to bear fruit and that women will be further empowered.

We also wish to highlight the following. Afghanistan is fully committed to upholding human rights in Afghan detention centres. In that respect, a number of concrete measures have been taken by the National Directorate of Security, including capacity-building measures, human rights awareness workshops for personnel and the establishment of a human rights division to monitor and investigate human rights situations. The Afghan police and other security forces are following a similar approach. In the wake of the 20 January report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on alleged cases of prisoner mistreatment, President Karzai issued a decree

establishing an independent commission to investigate the cases referred to in the UNAMA report. Since then, greater focus has been given to ensuring full adherence to human rights standards in Afghan detention centres.

As the security transition proceeds, Afghanistan is also resolute in achieving a successful outcome in its peace and reconciliation process, which is aimed at ending the current conflict and strife. By ending the conflict, we will eliminate the very conditions that were conducive to challenges in the field of human rights.

As members of the High Peace Council and as members of civil society, women play a central role in the peace process. The results of our peace and reconciliation efforts will in no way jeopardize the hard-won gains of the past 11 years, especially those relating to human rights, and to the rights of women in particular.

Before concluding, I wish to state that the international community has a key role to play in supporting continuous efforts aimed at ending all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence, in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries. For our part, Afghanistan remains firmly committed to playing its part in ensuring the full protection of women's rights around the world and to preventing sexual violence and all other forms of violations of human rights.