

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber**  
*Statement by Mr. Perceval Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations.*

I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181). Our respect, immense appreciation and sentiments go to Ms. Zainab Bangura. Our full solidarity goes to Ms. Rhoda Misaka. I wish to thank them for their briefings and for their commitment to making progress on full equality for women.

I am going to take a different angle in relation to referring to how much we have done. I am going to focus not only on what how much we still have to do, but also to add a hint of optimism.

First, the international governmental community has agreed that sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict constitute a war crime and a crime against humanity. It is worth mentioning it when we in the international community agree to say things in the same way and to work to the same end — in this instance towards the eradication of a problem.

Secondly, there is also reason for optimism owing to the international tribunals, such as those for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia and the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Today, the International Criminal Court and those tribunals have been building a clear definition of sexual violence as a war crime and as a crime against humanity. Certain countries in my region of Latin America and the Caribbean are also doing so. In my country, 1,083 persons have been prosecuted and 443 have been convicted for crimes against humanity, with a gender perspective and the aspect of women's human rights having been incorporated in all the cases.

Sexual crimes reported by victims in their testimony were not subject to punitive action until Rwanda, Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone, until the initiatives undertaken in our own countries, because they remained invisible. They were part of war, the spoils that came with vengeance and hate that targeted women's bodies. But while gender-based violence, and sexual violence aimed at women and girls in particular, is not a new phenomenon in history, the adoption of measures to investigate and prosecute it nationally and internationally is very recent. For that reason, we had to continue to work patiently but collaboratively. As my dear Jordanian colleague said, gender-based crimes used to be considered collateral damage in war; their investigation in many cases was peripheral and often resulted in impunity for the perpetrators.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights says that acts of sexual violence against women are crimes against humanity when they are used as weapons to inspire terror. It has defined sexual violence as any physical or mental abuse committed as an act of violence and also characterizes it as a crime of torture. Sexual crimes against women are now internationally codified. There is no statute of limitations, which we should recall here in the Security Council. Crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations.

The Belém do Pará Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women says that it is not only an offence to human dignity but also a violation of human rights. Let me speak not just about what the justice system has said, the words I have just read out. Justice in fact now says that because the victims had begun to be heard.

In one horrible case, a woman named Susana was raped in the hospital after just having been operated on. To this day I can hear her crying and saying that she had been a virgin. That was a crime against nature. For a woman, rape is an act of the worst possible humiliation.

Another woman, Monica, said: "I asked them, when the Red Cross came to see us, I asked, 'As a woman, how is it possible that I did not become pregnant after being raped so many times?' They explained to me that women's periods tended to stop. They said that in concentration camps, like here, we did not become pregnant, we were afraid of getting pregnant. We did not menstruate. We did not want to end up pregnant by a rapist."

Estela said: “They did not allow us to bathe. It was very hard not to be able to wash after being raped and to have to remain soiled. They would give me stale bread. I was able to wash in a bathroom only a couple of times. I have images in my mind of being raped in the bathroom. By the final rapes I was fainting; I do not have a recollection of those. They would blindfold me. I heard a girl screaming, ‘Mama, mama, mama’. We were in the same camp, and she was being raped.”

A man named David said: “They would give us electric shocks to our gums, under our lips, to our genitals. In my case, I had an abscess on my penis the size of a peach. They also placed things in my rectum that would conduct electricity. We were humiliated. I could not bear the agony. How could we go back — to say that a boy had been raped?”

I hope that all the victims will be heard, as those victims were heard and it was possible to do justice and combat impunity. We hope we will be able to work not just to eradicate this crime against humanity in conflict situations, but also to build equality for women in times of peace. Our friend Ms. Bangura has said it. “We will go out to find them”, the children and grandchildren of the State terrorism that took place in Argentina call out in the streets. “As with the Nazis, we will find them, no matter where they are.” They call out in the streets for the sake of the memory of their mothers and for the sake of truth, justice and reparation.

“We seek them without weapons, without hate or vengeance. We seek them for the sake of truth, memory, justice, reparation and peace.”