

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, (Conflict Related Sexual Violence)
23 February 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E Mr. Nazarian, Permanent Representative of Armenia

Allow me first to express my thanks to you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. Armenia fully supports the Security Council's recognition of the need to take effective measures to address conflict-related sexual violence. We welcome the recent report (S/2012/33) of the Secretary-General. My delegation also welcomes the presentation of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Margot Wallström, and we commend her tireless efforts and leadership. We are also grateful for the informative statements made by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and by Ms. Megheirbi.

Today's debate addresses an urgent matter. More and more, we are witnessing a disturbing trend in the use of sexual violence as a political and military tool, the effects of which are grave and long lasting, often alienating entire communities. Although conflict related sexual violence is not a women's issue, it is a known fact that a disproportionate number of victims of such violence are women and girls. Sexual violence affects all aspects of women's lives, compromising their wellbeing, security and basic human rights. It further exacerbates the inequities that women face and, in so doing, it threatens peace, security, development and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. As such, addressing sexual violence demands a multilayered approach and requires involvement on the international, regional and national levels. We must identify the crime and bring those responsible to justice.

During the past decade, particular attention has been paid to addressing some of the specific crimes experienced by women and girls during armed conflicts, namely, rape, trafficking, enforced prostitution and enslavement. It is critical to ensure accountability for past and present crimes, and to not grant immunity to perpetrators. Otherwise, we would be providing amnesty for future crimes. In that regard, Armenia is encouraged by the report of the Secretary-General, which for the first time includes an annex that lists the parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the Council's agenda. Such reporting and systematic data collection are critical, because crimes of sexual violence remain underreported due to stigmatization and fear of reprisals. We hope that such measures will promote accountability and that they will provide timely and reliable analyses based on which the Security Council can carry out its responsibility to protect civilians from conflict-related sexual violence. We cannot address sexual violence, however, by simply naming and punishing offenders. More fundamental changes are needed on institutional and societal levels as well.

This week we will commemorate the tragic events that took place in Sumgait, where civilians were killed and horrendously sexually violated just because they were Armenian. However, the focus of today's debate is conflict-related sexual violence in situations on the Council's agenda. It is our firm belief that the effectiveness of the work of the Council and its members arises in large part from its ability to focus on the agenda. It is unfortunate, then, that one representative used this debate, as inappropriate as this may be, as a forum to voice accusatory grievances with regard to the killing of civilians in Khojaly. As we tackle the important issue of conflict-related sexual violence, we must remain accurate, reliable and, most importantly, focused on the objective at hand in order to enhance protection and achieve effective results.

In conclusion, although important steps have been taken towards our common goal of preventing and effectively responding to conflict-related sexual violence, much remains to be done. Armenia remains committed to working closely with the Council, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the other relevant United Nations bodies toward this noble end.