

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

*Statement by H.E Mr. King, representative of Australia*

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate. We very much appreciate your initiative, as well as the briefings we received this morning. In the two and a half years since the Council committed to taking more effective action to prevent and address sexual violence in conflict, we have witnessed a significant number of United Nations actions designed to turn rhetoric into action. The work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict has been integral to this effort. The landmark adoption of resolution 1960 (2010) 12 months ago demonstrated the Council's willingness to take measures to end the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. It is critical that the Council and Member States implement resolution 1960 (2010) fully.

Australia strongly supports the work of the Special Representative, particularly the increasing use of field visits and direct engagement with parties to conflict. We encourage the Council to receive regular briefings from the Special Representative when she considers issues related to sexual violence to be relevant to its deliberations. That would help the Council to undertake its preventive role.

We know that conflict situations are usually characterized by the breakdown of law and order. The impunity that can prevail in such situations has a particularly devastating impact on the victims of sexual violence. Accountability for crimes of sexual violence is critical to changing behaviours. The increased engagement of the Council with the parties listed in the Secretary-General's report (S/2012/33) is an important element in developing such cultures of accountability, as is the consideration by sanctions committees of targeted and graduated measures against persistent perpetrators of violence.

We encourage the Council to remain seized of the need to deploy women protection advisers to peacekeeping and special political missions. The inclusion of relevant information in country-specific reports and in mission mandates must also be considered. We also join South Africa in encouraging the inclusion of more women as uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations, and welcome India's statement today that it is willing to increase its own contribution in this regard.

We welcome the recent deployments of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. South Sudan's use of this expertise to guide the planning of its justice system should be particularly welcomed. Integrating the voices of women into design will better ensure gender-responsive justice systems.

Over the past two and a half years, we have witnessed a renewed dedication by the United Nations, as well as troop- and police-contributing countries, to developing and implementing tools to prevent and address sexual violence, consistent with their mandate to protect civilians. The rollout through scenario-based training for peacekeepers of the United Nations toolkit to address conflict-related sexual violence was an important development, and Australia was pleased to fund it. We encourage troop- and police-contributing countries to integrate this tool into pre-deployment training.

Security sector reform must address conflict related sexual violence. The development of human rights training tools for security officials will help to extend these efforts to detention and interrogation facilities, which are often beyond the reach of peacekeeping missions. Australia is also pleased to be working with the Department of Political Affairs and UN-Women to support women's engagement in decision-making on security sector reform.

Separately, we have supported the development of a victim management programme for Pacific police, and developed police manuals on gender-based violence in Timor-Leste. The Australian Federal Police is also formulating a police development strategy and toolkit that include a focus on gender and conflict related issues, which will assist our police who are working with international partners to address conflict related sexual violence.

Australia continues to build on its work to implement Resolution 1325 (2000). We are consulting closely with civil society to develop the first Australian national action plan on women, which includes work to protect the human rights of women and girls affected by conflict, particularly in relation to sexual violence. Last year, we appointed a global ambassador for women and girls, and the protection of women and girls in conflict zones is a core component of the ambassador's mandate.

We look forward to the Secretary-General's next report outlining recommendations for advocacy and action to be made by the United Nations joint consultation forum. The momentum of the past two years must be harnessed for further action and results.