

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Mehdiyev, Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to thank the United Kingdom for convening this open debate on women and peace and security and for submitting a concept note on the topic (S/2013/335, annex). I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the representative of the non-governmental organization Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, for their extensive statements.

Azerbaijan welcomes the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013) on sexual violence at today's meeting and believes that it will further advance the issue. Civilians continue to suffer from inadequate protection in situations of armed conflict, including discriminatory treatment, torture, sexual violence, extrajudicial executions, mass population displacement and ethnic cleansing. In many situations of armed conflict, sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war to terrorize and force displacement. The increasing attention of the Security Council and the wider international community to the issue has led to the development of a solid normative framework and to raising awareness about the impact of sexual violence on its victims, their families and societies.

It is imperative that all parties to armed conflict strictly abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. Azerbaijan reiterates its strong condemnation of all acts of sexual violence in conflict. There can be no tolerance for such acts, and all the necessary measures must be taken to end impunity. Governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians, and national courts are the principal venues for holding individuals accountable for crimes of sexual violence. At the same time, inadequate national capacity and expertise for investigating and prosecuting acts of sexual violence remains one of the main impediments to ensuring accountability. In that regard, we note the efforts of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1888 (2009), to strengthen the capacity of national rule-of-law and justice actors. However, when national authorities fail to take action, the international community should play a more proactive role in ensuring an appropriate response.

Unfortunately, not all grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including acts of sexual violence, receive sufficient attention and response at the international and regional levels. More resolute and targeted measures are therefore required to bring the perpetrators of such acts to justice; such measures and appropriate protection efforts must obviously be free of selectivity and politically motivated approaches and preferences.

It is essential to establish the truth with respect to gross violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including sexual violence in conflict, and to provide adequate and effective reparations. It is also important to ensure that such reparations are established through judicial or administrative mechanisms and made available to victims. Furthermore, past wrongs that have been left unpunished or unrecognized may impede progress in achieving long-awaited peace and reconciliation, and can also play a key role in the eruption of new conflicts and the commission of new crimes. It is also essential to address sexual violence in conflict through all available means, including by mandating international commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, as well as by supporting the implementation of their recommendations.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our support for more systematic and frequent discussions of this topic and to once again commend the United Kingdom for convening this open debate.