

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict-Affected Situations, October 18th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ms. Velichko, Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations

Allow me to congratulate the delegation of Azerbaijan on holding this open debate on the role of women and the rule of law and ensuring justice in conflict and post- conflict situations.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence for their personal commitment and leadership in the fight against violence against women. We also believe that UN Women and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should play an important role in combating violence against women and protecting women's rights.

Belarus condemns all forms of violence, including in conflict situations, particularly against the most vulnerable segments of society — women and children. As with any other country, Belarus has zero tolerance for that scourge. Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2106 (2013) adopted in June, have created a clear legal framework for responding to sexual violence in conflict and prohibited its use as a weapon of war.

We believe that a thorough investigation of all acts of sexual violence and the immediate punishment of perpetrators are crucial in combatting this scourge. That violence can be eliminated only through coherent collective efforts by the international community — Member States, international organizations and civil society. Such efforts can and should be carried out through a genuine partnership based on a unified approach, respect for each other's views and agreement on the steps to be taken.

Today, it is clear that there is no State in the world that would not endeavour to put an end to violence against women. The question is not who is right, who is for, who is against violence. Today, the question is how and in what way can come together through our collective efforts.

In that context, we are seriously concerned about recent incidents — be they deliberate or unintentional — that replace the painstaking and time-consuming work on the formation of such a partnership with vociferous media campaigns based on documents drawn up by an inner circle and hastily gathered expressions of support for them. We are willing to believe in the sincere intentions of the proponents of that approach to combating violence against women. At the same time, we cannot but disagree with an approach that puts those States with the wisdom and strength of will to consider every word in the international documents that they sign in an awkward position.

We also consider it inadmissible that members of the international community that have done a great deal, including specifically in combatting violence against women and children, have been placed in an artificially created situation and forced to justify themselves for failing to appear on a list of countries who combat sexual violence. Every State plays an important role in combating sexual violence, and no vociferous media campaign should alienate or disregard even one Member.

We pay tribute to reasonable initiatives to strengthen international support to combat sexual violence in conflict. Belarus calls for us not to replace real partnerships with unity that is merely on paper, and to avoid hasty and irresponsible actions that may devalue the noble idea of combatting this scourge.

Our shared responsibility, affirmed as a moral imperative of policy, is to steadfastly abide by partnerships based on respect, even if that goes against our short-term interests and plans. Only that approach can guarantee a genuine implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, resolution 2106 (2013), and resolution 2122 (2013), adopted today.