

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

Statement by Mrs. Anđelić, Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for organizing this important debate, and we welcome the valuable contribution of the Honourable Foreign Secretary, Mr. Hague. I also thank the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, who visited Bosnia and Herzegovina recently, as well as Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar from the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice for their statements.

Violence against women is certainly the most brutal manifestation of discrimination, and we are fully committed to addressing all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict. The protection of women in conflict situations and ending impunity remain our utmost priorities. Sexual violence in armed conflict represents one of the most serious forms of the violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Furthermore, impunity for sexual violence in conflict is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. Therefore, we advocate recognition of the importance of women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict settings. We also believe that more has to be done to address these ongoing crimes, including by permanent opposition to the traditional account that sexual violence in armed conflict is a cultural phenomenon, an unavoidable consequence of war or a less important crime.

Bearing all this in mind, we fully support the work of the United Nations in addressing sexual violence in armed conflict, particularly the mandates of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and we continue to closely cooperate with them. We acknowledge their active advocacy efforts, inter alia with Governments, in order to address these horrible crimes.

The Security Council's recognition of this matter as a serious concern for international peace and security is of great importance for building a solid framework for preventing and addressing this gruesome tactic of war. Therefore, the Council has a significant role to play, in accordance with the relevant resolutions, particularly in emphasizing the importance of national and international authorities strengthening the rule of law response. All appropriate mechanisms and procedures for monitoring commitments by parties in conflict should be supported by the Council. Also, United Nations officials should be more engaged in dialogue with States and other stakeholders who may exert influence to elicit such commitments.

At this point, I would like to elaborate on the achievements of my country in this regard.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to promoting the role of women in peace and security through the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions. To illustrate our genuine commitment in this regard, we need to point out that Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first country in South-East Europe to adopt an action plan aimed at implementation of the aforementioned resolution. The plan was used as sample document for other countries of the region that drafted similar action plans. In addition, my country has also adopted a gender action plan and enacted laws regulating the prevention of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Involving women in conflict prevention and mediation and deploying women's protection advisers to United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions is crucial to building and reinforcing peace. We believe that women should play a greater role as legitimate partners in international and national efforts to maintain peace and security, which is fundamental for more effective performance

on the ground. Recruiting women in the civil, military and police components of peacekeeping missions can encourage local women to report incidents of sexual violence and contribute to establishing better communication with local communities. We spare no effort in advancing this issue and, as result of our commitment the relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have adopted a policy that one-third of candidates nominated for peacekeeping missions must be women.

We are aware of the fact that national Governments bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for the protection of civilian populations. In this regard, and with the aim of improving the overall situation of women who are victims of rape, we are undertaking efforts to finalize the drafting of a document entitled “Programme for victims of rape, sexual abuse and torture in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2013-2016”, which will seek to improve the position of all victims. One of the goals of the programme emphasizes the obligation of the State to provide access to reparations programmes for victims of war and the need to provide legal and psychological support to victims and/or witnesses in court proceedings and after them.

We recognize the positive steps in holding perpetrators to account at all levels. However, we believe that greater efforts need to be undertaken in this regard, including through the work of the International Criminal Court, the ad hoc tribunals and the national tribunals.

Finally, we would like to point out that the international community must continue to work on strengthening United Nations efforts to address sexual violence in armed conflict, and Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to contribute to those efforts.