

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Resolution 1820

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Statement by H.E Mr. Djibrill Yipènè Bassole, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso to the United Nations

Violence against women in areas of conflict is continuing, in spite of the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and all other relevant instruments. The phenomenon is worsening, becoming systematic and a genuine war strategy for some combatants. Victimized women and girls are deliberately targeted for abominable acts of violence. That is an unacceptable violation of the most fundamental human rights — in other words, a crime against humanity. Unfortunately, it seems that our repeated calls and recommendations have yet to be heeded.

Sexual violence in conflict zones highlights the vulnerability of young girls and women. That is especially true in certain parts of Africa where certain sociological factors continue to hinder their emancipation. When the violence itself does not outright kill the victims, its consequences take a heavy toll, leading to physical and psychological trauma, unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. How, then, can we effectively combat those degrading practices and ensure that women are better protected against such atrocities?

First of all, we must work to prevent conflict. We must make every effort to ensure that democracy and the rule of law take root, as well as to promote good governance and effective development policies. We must also devote resources to educating women and young girls. Education and training are the primary tools we must give them to help them empower themselves and participate in every aspect of the social, political and economic arenas, including even the military

If conflict does erupt, several actions must follow. In particular, the Council must have at its disposal precise, relevant and credible information about the nature of the violence in all its aspects, including information about those who planned and carried it out. Moreover, justice must be done when it comes to prosecuting and punishing perpetrators. There must be absolutely no impunity when it comes to this issue.

Other complementary actions must also be taken at the social level. We must make sure that in situations of conflict, women and children, who are usually left to fend for themselves, are protected by peacekeeping operations.

In conclusion, I should like to welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations system to combat this scourge. Lastly, I would like to thank and congratulate you personally, Madam President, for your leadership, as well as for having made it possible for the Security Council to deliberate this morning on this important issue.