

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

Statement by Mr. Rishchynski, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations.

I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to take the floor.

Canada wishes to thank the United Kingdom for holding this open debate on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, an issue of great importance to our country, as it includes the despicable acts of rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity. Those acts are deplorable, prohibited by international law, and constitute an impediment to conflict resolution, development and transition to peace and democracy.

Canada, which is a proud member and Chair of the Group of Friends against Sexual Violence in Conflict, recognizes that women's social, political and economic empowerment, their equality with men and the active participation of men and boys in combating all forms of violence against women are central to long-term prevention efforts. Preventing sexual violence requires promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls. Prevention also requires supporting survivors on their path to recovery from such crimes, assisting their access to justice and holding perpetrators to account.

The Security Council and the United Nations system should act systematically and comprehensively to address gaps and challenges in its work on women, peace and security, as well as to monitor the commitments by parties to conflict to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence.

The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) details the global scope of conflict-related sexual violence, including many instances of early and forced marriage of women and girls. Canada is gravely concerned about reports of forced marriage, rape and sexual slavery and condemns the early and forced marriage of women and girls in all situations, including the practice of forcing rape survivors to marry their perpetrators or other family members. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to focus attention on the practice of early and forced marriage in the context of armed conflict.

The primary responsibility for the prevention of sexual violence in conflict lies with national Governments as well as with the leadership of non-State armed groups. Where those leaders fail to respond to sexual violence or are party to the crimes, they must be held to account. Often, however, Governments lack the capacity to respond adequately.

Conflict significantly weakens national justice systems, resulting in a limited number of perpetrators facing justice. In such cases, Member States could request the assistance of trained experts for investigations and prosecutions and to strengthen the capacity of local law enforcement.

Canada welcomes the engagement of the Security Council on the issue of preventing sexual violence. We urge the Council to ensure the inclusion of prevention and response to sexual violence in its mandates and resolutions and to ensure that those elements are implemented. The Council should take concrete measures to support women's opportunities for equal participation and decision-making in all conflict-prevention and -resolution processes. It must ensure the health, safety, human rights and dignity of survivors and should hold perpetrators to full account.

In that regard, Canada calls on the Council to ensure that Sanctions Committees add criteria pertaining to acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence to their existing criteria. Further action

at the international level is imperative to end sexual violence in conflict, to tackle the lack of accountability that exists for those crimes and to provide comprehensive support services to survivors. For its part, Canada is active in the prevention and response to sexual violence in conflict. For example, Canada is contributing \$18.5 million to the United Nations Development Programme to support the fight against sexual violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, at the London launch of the Group of Eight declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict, Canada announced an additional \$5 million contribution to international efforts to be programmed this year.

Canada urges all Member States to join the international effort and we look forward to working together to stop sexual violence.