

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

Statement by Mr. Wang Min, Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations.

I welcome Foreign Secretary Hague and I am grateful for his coming to New York to preside over today's meeting. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their briefings. I have listened carefully to the statement by Ms. Anywar.

Women are a major force for peace, stability and development in society. The promotion of gender equality and women's rights represents a true reflection of human civilization and progress, and is also closely related to peace and world development. In situations of armed conflict, however, sexual violence against women is employed by parties to conflict as a means of war more often than not. Vulnerable groups, including women, bear the brunt of conflict in many situations. Sexual violence against women and their sexual enslavement in armed conflict are not only grave violations of women's rights but also a flagrant challenge to the human conscience and social justice.

It is no surprise that such acts have been unanimously condemned and opposed by the international community. China strongly condemns all violence against civilians in armed conflict, and is resolutely opposed to using sexual violence as a means of war, as well as to any acts of sexual violence or sexual enslavement against women. We call for the full implementation of the Council's relevant resolutions and urge all parties to conflict to abide by international law and international humanitarian law, and to cease all acts of violence against women immediately. I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, combating sexual violence in conflict must be done with full respect for national sovereignty, and should rely primarily on national efforts. National Governments bear the primary responsibility for protecting women's rights in their country; it is they, first and foremost, that should carry out the task of implementing the Council's resolutions and fighting sexual violence in conflict. In assisting the countries concerned, the international community, including the United Nations, must fully respect their sovereignty; it is important to respect their will and the programmes drawn up by national Governments based on their own conditions. It is important to strengthen coordination with the Governments concerned, provide constructive help and avoid imposing from outside.

Secondly, the Security Council has an active role to play in fighting sexual violence in armed conflict, in the light of its own mandate and strengths. However, it is different from the Human Rights Council and it is also different from the Commission on the Status of Women. When addressing sexual violence, the Council must not encroach upon the responsibilities of other United Nations bodies. It must effectively implement its primary responsibility, that of maintaining international peace and security, and its efforts must focus on conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction, thereby creating a legal, political and security environment conducive to addressing sexual violence in armed conflict and to protecting women's rights. The various organs of the United Nations must follow their own mandates and respect the division of labour, making every attempt to avoid any overlap of efforts.

Thirdly, attention must be paid to the issues underlying the protection of women's security and curbing sexual violence in armed conflict. It is important to address issues of women's rights at a deeper level, in order to promote women's full development and eliminate the root causes of conflict. Attention should also be given to improving the economic and social development of the countries concerned, in order to enhance women's status and fully empower them. The international

community must increase its attention to the development of women in those countries and scale up its aid in that area. It should support capacity- building for the Governments concerned and ensure that assistance to women's development is increased in their countries so as to effectively enhance women's status and protect their rights.

China took an active part in the consultations on drafting today's resolution on sexual violence in armed conflict (resolution 2106 (2013)), and has just voted in favour of it. We believe that the Special Representatives and United Nations missions should implement it in strict observance of the Council's mandate.

China is ready to continue to play, with the international community, an active role in fighting sexual violence in armed conflict.