

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

*Statement by Mrs. Hrdá, Permanent Mission of Czech Republic to the United Nations*

Let me thank the Azerbaijan presidency of the Security Council for scheduling this important debate and the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/525), as well as today's briefers for their updates.

We highly welcome the adoption today of resolution 2122 (2013) and align ourselves with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union.

The protection of human rights, including the rights of women, belongs to our foreign policy priorities. The Czech Republic takes an active stance in promoting the strengthening and effective realization of the rights of women and in preventing gender-based violence in various multilateral forums. We also raise the issue within the universal periodic review mechanism.

The Czech Republic fully endorses the relevant rules of international criminal law regarding "rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, enforced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity". The Rome Statute qualifies these as a war crime, both in the context of international and non-international armed conflicts and — when it forms part of a widespread attack against a civilian population — as a crime against humanity.

It is our conviction that the international community should put particular focus on preventive efforts, namely in the case of those violations of international law that belong to the core crimes included under the concept of the responsibility to protect. The rich jurisprudence of the international criminal tribunals has recognized rape as a powerful tool of war used to intimidate, persecute and terrorize the enemy. The Czech Republic believes that the effective prosecution of the perpetrators of such crimes is an important element of lasting peace and justice.

As part of its human rights promotion activities, the Czech Republic takes into consideration gender aspects and the protection of women in post-conflict situations, as well as in countries in transition, including by supporting projects of Czech and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Since 2005, the transition promotion programme of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs — a unique financial instrument aimed at democracy assistance — has supported projects of civil society organizations that are working to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights by empowering civil society, including women's organizations, throughout the world.

For example, a recent project has been implemented by the Czech NGO ADRA — which deals with the capacity-building of civil society in the protection of women's rights — in Georgia. Its aim is to achieve the highest standard of protection in the context of providing services to victims of domestic violence. Through the project, the Czech Republic has shared its experience with its Georgian partners, particularly concerning the legal counseling to victims of domestic violence and, importantly, in the broader context of assistance.

The Czech Republic also provides long-term support to women victims of sexual violence in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The support — amounting to over 32 million

Czech koruny today — ranges from providing first aid and comprehensive medical, psychological and legal assistance, to providing shelter and livelihood support for women and their unwanted children who have been excluded from local society, as well as organizing awareness campaigns for medical personnel and the public in the affected areas. Awareness-raising aimed at the public sphere, as well as the judiciary, is a key prerequisite in ensuring effective protection of the rights of women in countries in transition or post-conflict situations.