

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security (Sexual Violence)
23rd of February 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, to the United Nations

At the outset, I would like to thank the Government of Togo for convening this important debate today. It provides me with an opportunity to inform members of the Security Council of our joint efforts and the challenges that we encounter as we implement this extremely significant mandate. The mandate related to sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is one of the most demanding in peacekeeping. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) remain deeply concerned that, despite universal and repeated condemnation, sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war, in particular against women and children. We greatly appreciate the political advocacy and leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Wallström, in heading the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. During the past year, collaboration between my Department, Special Representative Wallström, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Nations Action has been strengthened. Thanks to these partnerships, we are continuing to produce concrete results. Since last year's debate, we have worked with the Office of Ms. Wallström and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights to develop terms of reference for women's protection advisers. A tripartite approach has been adopted in the context of the advisers by placing them in gender and human rights organizations and in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the relevant peacekeeping operations to facilitate cooperation. This approach maximizes existing capacities in the field and avoids fragmentation and duplication of responsibilities. Several peacekeeping operations were selected and invited to identify women's protection advisers within the limits of existing resources. However, in cases of conflict-related sexual violence on a major scale, additional resources should be made available to deal with the high volume of work. Our efforts to identify and deploy advisers are currently focused on United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. In 2011, the Office of Special Representative Wallström and United Nations Action developed guidelines on the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements. The human rights structures in our peacekeeping operations direct monitoring and verification, in close collaboration with other mission components and the members of the United Nations country team. While the arrangements are not an end in themselves, they should contribute towards a better prevention and programming policy response.

There remain challenges that we are trying to address: mobilizing capacities to implement the arrangements; ensuring the presence of uniformed women in affected areas to reach out to women and girls; and addressing inadequate infrastructure and communications to gain access to important regions to monitor and verify incidents. Ultimately, impunity, scarce services in rural areas and insecurity deter survivors from reporting the sexual violence to which they have been subjected. The DPKO and the Department of Field Support stand ready to provide the necessary support to encourage Governments to institutionalize the prohibition and prevention of and accountability for conflict-related sexual violence through the development of policies and national security sector training. We must recognize the close links between time-bound commitments and security sector development. Meticulous and systematic assessments of armed groups must be part of any integration policy in national forces. We are proud to be an active member of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1888 (2009). Accountability for sexual violence must be established to combat sexual discrimination and inequality. The reform of existing legislation, access to a functional justice system and witness protection programmes are fundamental. Political will is also essential to ensure that perpetrators of international human rights and humanitarian law violations, including sexual violence, are tried and held accountable. The rule of law as a whole must prevail, by means of security and judicial sectors, including correctional systems. In that regard, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has worked with civil society and women in particular to ensure that the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur included provisions for the Government of the Sudan to take the steps necessary to deliver effective and timely justice for serious human rights violations, including sexual violence, and to prevent amnesty in cases of crimes of sexual violence. Progress has also been made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where MONUSCO supports civilian and military prosecutors in investigating allegations of conflict-related sexual violence. In 2010 and 2011, MONUSCO undertook more than 30 joint investigation team missions with magistrates and police officers to investigate cases of sexual violence. MONUSCO also supported the holding of trials, so as to

strengthen the military justice system, including through mobile court proceedings in remote areas. As a result, 217 judgments on sexual violence were delivered in 2011. MONUSCO and partners also support 39 legal centres, which provide free legal assistance to survivors of sexual violence and to their families. In 2011 more than 2,200 survivors received assistance. May I add that when I was in the Democratic Republic of the Congo a month ago I visited an incredible place in Goma named Heal Africa. It is a hospital primarily devoted to treating victims of rape, physically and psychologically, as well as to teaching them trades for them to live on after they leave the facility. It is through just that type of clinic that we can have a positive impact on the lives of unfortunate victims. We should encourage such projects. Capacity-building is an important element of the sexual violence mandate, which we are carrying out in support of host Governments and within our missions. For example, in Timor-Leste, Liberia, Haiti and Darfur, United Nations police work in support of the national police to develop dedicated spaces to receive survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. For example, three such spaces are being launched this month in at risk camps in Haiti. To that end, the Police Division is working with police-contributing countries to develop S/PV.6722 8 12-23931 training and trainer modules to standardize the prevention and investigation of sexual and genderbased violence in post-conflict environments, for United Nations police and national police forces. In the course of last year, 103 police trainers were certified through five regional training courses. To capacitate our military components, we have developed training modules, in consultation with Member States, to accompany the military gender guidelines. We are piloting them regionally. We have also introduced a module on conflict-related sexual violence, developed under the auspices of UN Action into the DPKO/DFS protection of civilians training modules for military, police and civilian components. Those modules were recently finalized and disseminated to our missions and key peacekeeping training partners.

Ultimately, protection from sexual violence is a key element of the protection of civilians mandate of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Given the diverse environments in which peacekeeping missions operate, different protection arrangements have emerged. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, joint protection teams and community liaison assistants have become essential elements of MONUSCO's efforts to address the protection of civilians. Community alert networks established through the use of cellular phones and high-frequency radio networks are currently being piloted. Another example is Darfur, where UNAMID and the United Nations country team regularly conduct joint assessment field missions in selected camps for internally displaced persons, to identify security and humanitarian concerns, such as access to basic services, the human rights situation, patterns of population movement and communities' coping mechanisms. The missions verify reported cases of sexual violence, and therefore they also address the problem of conflicting information. In order to capture good practices and lessons learned, we are conducting an inventory of our structures and practices, which can be replicated in other contexts. Furthermore, the United Nations Action early warning indicators matrix on conflict-related sexual violence, to which the Special Representative referred, will be adapted to the operational environments of two peacekeeping operations and piloted and introduced into the protection arrangements of other peacekeeping operations later this year. It is important to underscore that the host Government is ultimately responsible for the protection of its civilian population. Missions cannot act as a surrogate for State authority. Where mandated, therefore, we must strengthen frail State institutions, to facilitate their protection response. In that regard, we welcome the recent adoption of the Secretary-General's human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, which ultimately strengthens the protection abilities of the host Government's forces. MONUSCO is implementing that policy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which makes the Mission's support to the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the Police nationale civile (PNC) conditional on their respect of international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. The policy seeks to improve FARDC behaviour through screening the chain of command of its units for past humanitarian law and human rights violations, including acts of sexual violence, before support is provided by the Mission. Indeed, in the course of last year, MONUSCO screened more than 2,000 FARDC and PNC personnel. Support was suspended to two FARDC battalions based on evidence of human rights violations. I am pleased to highlight that collaboration and progress has been achieved with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Last month I also had another meeting with a senior general commanding FARDC forces in North Kivu, who acknowledged that our due diligence policy had now been fully understood and taken on by himself and his troops: they respect and take full account of our requirements in the matter. In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to a few key points. In countries where conflict-related sexual violence is taking place, we call on Member States to fund women advisers in order to strengthen the implementation of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements and the sexual violence mandate from a peace and security perspective. Time-bound commitments are part of security sector reform and a strong tool for preventing sexual violence

from taking place. Our missions stand ready to support host Governments to address those commitments, to work with the security sector to address the integration of armed groups in national security forces and to work in S/PV.6722 12-23931 9 close support of national military and civilian justice systems to ensure accountability for incidents of sexual violence. DPKO and DFS also look forward to close collaboration with host Governments to implement the Secretary-General's human rights due diligence policy. Uniformed women in peacekeeping are key to addressing conflict-related sexual violence. DPKO and DFS call on troop- and police-contributing countries to commit to that issue and to increase the number of women represented in national security forces. We have set the objective of 20 per cent women in the United Nations police forces by 2014, but we must go further. Finally, I would like to underline that political, social and economic empowerment of women in fragile States is fundamental to eradicating discrimination, inequality and sexual and gender-based violence. Women's exclusion from the sectors responsible for their disempowerment must be addressed through adopting the principles of resolution 1325 (2000) and mobilizing strong political will. Political will is what it is really about.