

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

Statement by H.E Mr. Abdelaziz representative of Egypt

At the outset, allow me to express our sincere appreciation for your initiative, Mr. President, in convening the meeting today. Our appreciation also goes to Ms. Margot Wallström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for their comprehensive presentations today.

The report of the Secretary-General on conflict related sexual violence (S/2012/33) that has been introduced today by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict highlights progress achieved in monitoring, analysis and reporting activities aimed at addressing sexual violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations, including the important role of women's protection advisers in that context, and provides information on parties to conflict credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for acts of sexual violence, in relation to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1960 (2010) on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

In that regard, Egypt would like to express its appreciation for the efforts exerted by Ms. Wallström and her team in preparing the report in consultation with concerned Member States. However, Egypt believes that the inclusion of section IV.B, entitled "Sexual violence in the context of elections, political strife and civil unrest", to the report of the Secretary-General falls far beyond the mandate of the Special Representative to implement resolution 1960 (2010) which, in paragraph 8,

"Requests the Secretary General to establish monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence, including rape in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict and other situations relevant to the implementation of resolution 1888 (2009), as appropriate, and taking into account the specificity of each country".

As resolution 1888 (2009) focuses mainly on situations of particular concern with respect to sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, the inclusion of section IV.B in the report, in our view, constitutes an unjustified widening of the scope of activities of the Special Representative without a proper mandate from the Security Council.

Despite the spirit of openness and transparency that characterized Egyptian foreign policy after the revolution of 25 January 2011, Egypt does not see any reason whatsoever for its inclusion for the first time in the new and innovative section IV.B of the report, which mixes conflict-related with non-conflict-related sexual violence.

Notwithstanding the extensive consultations between my delegation and the Special Representative on paragraphs 80 to 82 of the report, it is important to stress once again that our engagement in those negotiations cannot be construed as acceptance of the addition of the new section, and to stress yet again that the current situation in Egypt cannot in any way be characterized as armed conflict. Thus, Egypt cannot be dealt with on equal footing with other States mentioned in the innovative section IV.B of the report, where a conflict exists and widespread systematic documented sexual violence has been committed against women.

What is more shocking is the major discrepancy in section IV.B, comparing a peaceful revolution in Egypt — where a single isolated incident is under court-martial consideration — with the grave situation in Syria, which has witnessed and is still witnessing an armed conflict in which military forces are involved in a conflict situation with opposition armed groups, according to the Syrian

Government itself. Nor can this single, isolated incident in Egypt be equated with events in other countries mentioned in the same section of the report, such as that referred to in paragraph 84, where “two years after the violence, not a single perpetrator has been convicted”, and another referred to in paragraph 85, where “a total of 1,500 cases were documented, although the exact number was estimated to have been higher”.

While reiterating our appreciation to Ms. Wallström for the openness and flexibility shown during the consultations with the mission of Egypt on this issue, which resulted in the inclusion of some of our views in the report — particularly those related to the decision of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces to tighten the penalty for crimes of sexual harassment, abduction and rape — other Egyptian proposals have not found their way into the report. The allegations of virginity tests in paragraph 81 have been extensively investigated by the Egyptian military authorities and the suspected doctor is being tried before the supreme military court, reflecting Egypt’s strong belief in the rule of law and zero tolerance towards any violation, foremost among which is any sexual-related violation. This in itself should have provided the justification for not mentioning Egypt at all in the report, particularly as this incident and the way it has been handled represent no systematic practice in this regard.

Egypt is cruising on a smooth democratic transition towards the fulfilment of the Egyptian people’s aspirations to the rule of law, justice and human rights in a context of full accountability and non-impunity. Moreover, most of the other incidents cited in paragraph 81 of the report occurred during the troubled last days of the former regime. All of them have been investigated and the perpetrators are currently on trial, starting with the former President himself down to any perpetrator of any violation of the rights of the men and women of our country. Therefore, I assert once again that there is no ground to substantiate the inclusion of Egypt in the current report or in any future report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on this matter.

Due regard should be given to the influential role played by Egyptian women in the 25 January revolution, which in itself was a clear manifestation of their active participation in the transformation process within Egyptian society. In the same vein, Egypt reiterates its full commitment to all international legal instruments and protocols on the rights of women, and to furthering Egyptian women’s contribution in all public domains and preserving the gains they have made over decades.

I conclude by reiterating Egypt’s strong commitment to the promotion and protection of all women’s rights, and by urging all United Nations mandate holders — in this, case the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict — to perform their functions in strict observance of their mandates, upholding the principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity.