

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

Statement by Mr. Kolga, Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations

At the outset, allow me to join others in expressing gratitude to the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN Women, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the representative of the Non-governmental Organization Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their statements. I would also like to thank the Council presidency for taking up the topic and organizing the open debate today.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union delivered earlier. In addition, I would like to make the following remarks.

Estonia is dedicated to protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, both nationally and internationally. As a member of the Human Rights Council, our particular focus is on the rights of women and children, gender perspective in conflict settlements and the fight against impunity. Estonia firmly believes that the rule of law in conflict and post-conflict situations must promote justice and accountability in ways that further the rights of women, including through legal and institutional reforms that are gender sensitive. The equal right to decision-making and participation, along with women's empowerment, is crucial to ensure a functioning society and peace and justice in the aftermath of conflicts.

Additionally, as stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/525), women's representation in the justice sector plays a significant role in increasing the reporting of crimes and enhancing public trust in the rule of law institutions. The importance of prevention must likewise be stressed. By enabling women to fully participate in judicial systems, we can better tackle the root causes of impunity for violence against women.

Estonia welcomes the call by the Security Council in today's resolution to Member States to comply with their relevant obligations to end impunity and to thoroughly investigate and prosecute persons responsible for atrocity crimes. Estonia further agrees with the Council that the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern against women and girls has been strengthened through the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the ad hoc and mixed tribunals, and the specialized chambers in national tribunals. ICC prosecutions will not, however, be sufficient to ensure complete accountability. Therefore, it is essential that the gender provisions of the Rome Statute are translated into national prosecutions.

Justice for victims of atrocity crimes, however, entails more than just punishing perpetrators. The Rome Statute further empowers victims by its broad victim-participation scheme and underlines its commitment to victims by its reparations provisions. Likewise, the ICC Trust Fund for Victims has been doing important work to alleviate the suffering of victims in the countries where the Court is conducting investigations.

Estonia was honoured to join the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict during the General Assembly's opening week. We were also glad to see how much interest there was in the topic of enhancing accountability for sexual violence in conflict, discussed at a side event during that week that focused on the role of the ICC and that was hosted by the Estonian Mission to the United Nations. We would like to commend the important work of the Team of Experts on Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and I am glad to note that Estonia has made financial contributions to the activities of the Team.

Estonia would also like to take the opportunity to emphasize that in addition to conflict-related sexual violence, increased attention should be paid to the full range of violations and serious crimes experienced by women, including gendered impacts of enforced disappearances, foreign occupation, mass forced displacement, restrictions on humanitarian aid, conflict-related trafficking and the destruction of civilian infrastructure.

Let me also commend UN Women for their work targeted at raising the number of national action plans related to resolution 1325 (2000) or other relevant planning instruments, as outlined in the recently adopted UN Women Strategic Plan. Estonia developed its national action plan in 2010 and has advised a number of States on developing theirs. We would be ready to cooperate in that regard with other States in the future. We are looking forward to hearing the results of the global study, and to the high-level review in 2015.

In conclusion, we are glad to note that Estonia was among the sponsors of resolution 2106 (2013), which strengthens the monitoring and prevention of sexual violence in conflict, and we were happy to co-sponsor resolution 2122 (2013), adopted today.