

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Vrailas, Permanent Mission of European Union to the United Nations.*

I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. Croatia, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine and Georgia align themselves with this statement, the full version of which is being circulated in the Chamber.

I thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the representative on Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice and the Special Envoy of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for their statements delivered earlier today.

Today's debate addresses the root cause of recurring and pervasive sexual violence in conflict — the often predominant culture of impunity that allows these crimes to go unrecorded, unpunished and, at worst, tolerated by the community. We cannot combat sexual violence and ensure effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding without tackling this gap at all levels. Such actions must include the following.

With regard to ensuring adequate information, fact-finding and documentation, sexual violence in conflict remains universally underreported. Inter alia, that is the result of the threats faced by those who come forward to report this crime. We reiterate the need to take all measures for the protection of survivors, human rights defenders and journalists, who contribute to collecting information on sexual violence.

With regard to ensuring the prosecution of crimes of sexual violence and punishing perpetrators of crimes against women and girls under national and international law, we emphasize the significant advancement in international law made by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which includes sexual violence in the definition of crimes, in particular as a crime against humanity, and note that the ICC, as well as the non-permanent International Criminal Tribunals, continue to be important mechanisms in combating sexual violence in conflict. We furthermore acknowledge the national efforts to implement the Rome Statute. The crimes of sexual violence must be excluded from amnesty provisions in conflict-resolution processes. We support the continued application of targeted and graduated measures by the relevant Security Council Sanctions Committees aimed at perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, as well as other measures at its disposal including referrals to the ICC and steps towards the systematic monitoring of commitments by parties to conflict under resolution 1960 (2010).

With regard to ensuring women's leadership and the participation of women in peace processes and conflict resolution, those processes should also recognize explicitly the need to address crimes of sexual violence, as they lay the foundation for future institution-building and political and legal reforms.

There is a need to ensure the availability of reparations as a form of transitional gender justice, as well as accessible services, including health, education, psychosocial, legal and economic support.

We must raise awareness and combat the normalization of sexual violence, including beyond the end of the conflict, to counter stigmatization, shame and fear of social exclusion, which perpetuate the underreporting of sexual violence. We continue to underline the importance of the continued deployment of women's and child protection advisers.

The European Union continues to implement its dedicated policy on women and peace and security, as well as to support initiatives to strengthen international criminal justice and the rule of law. The EU now has gender advisers and/or human rights focal points in each of its crisis management missions and operations. The EU supports the swift deployment of human rights observers in Mali by the African Union and the United Nations and provides financial support for the deployment of observers. The EU training mission in Mali includes training on gender and human rights for the Malian armed forces.

We continue to support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/335) and the recommendations contained therein. We also welcome the Council's adoption of resolution 2106 (2013) today as an expression of the Council's continued determination to keep this issue under close scrutiny.