

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

*Statement by Mr. Mukerji, Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations.*

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important open debate on sexual violence in conflict in the broader context of the discourse on women and peace and security. I would also like to thank the Secretary- General, the Special Representative of the Secretary- General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the other briefers who made remarks this morning.

The resolution of conflict situations requires the adoption of a sustainable and holistic approach to conflict resolution and the overall reconstruction of impacted societies. In our view, gender equality and women's empowerment are integral to the pursuit of this objective. The participation of women in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction efforts is imperative for laying the foundation for durable peace. Economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy cannot be achieved without the active engagement of women.

Thirteen years ago, resolution 1325 (2000) highlighted the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and children, and the need for effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and the full participation of women in peace processes. That resolution also contained several detailed recommendations on how to deal with various aspects of this issue.

As reports made to the Security Council since resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted show, we have not made enough progress on implementing its recommendations. Take, for example, the peacekeeping operations mandated by the Security Council. As one of the major contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations for over six decades, India and its peacekeepers serving under the blue flag have also had to deal with this pernicious problem under challenging circumstances. Based on our experience on the ground, we are of the view that the Security Council must make available the resources required to implement the expanded scope of peacekeeping mandates. Specifically, we require greater commitment to the deployment of women's protection advisers in peacekeeping operations.

In resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council called for greater participation by women in the field-based operations of the United Nations in terms of the deployment of police personnel. We are proud of the fact that India was the first State Member of the United Nations to successfully deploy an all-woman police force as part of the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Liberia, where sexual violence had been one of the hallmarks of the conflict. Apart from the effectiveness of the force, which has been acknowledged by many, we believe that the functioning of such an all- woman force has also sent a strong deterrent message to those who indulge in the egregious crime of sexual violence in conflict. By deploying women to deal with conflict situations, we have demonstrated that we can push forward the goal of empowering women to deal with the crime of sexual violence in conflict and play a major role in the post-conflict reconstruction of traumatized societies. We hope that this example will encourage others to follow suit.

In earlier debates, India drew the attention of the Security Council to the impact of so-called militia groups on the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. As the reports made to the Council since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) show, that impact has been felt especially in crimes of sexual violence in conflict situations where peacekeeping mandates are in force.

It is in that context that we take the view that national Governments have the primary responsibility for prosecuting and deterring such crimes in conflict situations on their territories, even if these are alleged to have been committed by so-called militia groups. We believe that national Governments

should be assisted by the United Nations in augmenting their capacities to deal with this issue. That would play a vital role in ensuring better governance and the stabilization of post-conflict situations. The United Nations should focus its efforts in this area.

We would like to reiterate our principled position that debates such as that of today in the Security Council should focus on issues related to mandates specifically given by the Council. We would urge caution in going beyond such mandates in reports submitted to the Council, which can only serve to blur the focus of the Council and which contain the potential to divert much-needed resources away from the task at hand. It is critical, therefore, that such reports remain focused on the situations of armed conflict that are on the agenda of the Council, and not stray into so-called “situations of concern” on the basis of sweeping generalizations.

In conclusion, I would like once again to reaffirm India’s commitment to positively contribute to our collective efforts to tackle the crime of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, in the overall framework of the work of the United Nations on peacebuilding and the prevention and resolution of conflicts.