

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security (Sexual Violence)

23rd February 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr. Ragolini, Representative of the Italian Permanent Mission to the UN.

Mr. Ragolini (Italy): I congratulate you, Sir, on organizing this open debate of the Security Council. I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for their briefings. I would like to express great appreciation for the work of the Office of the Special Representative, as well as that of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

While Italy aligns itself with the statement that has been delivered by the observer of the European Union, we wish to make some additional remarks in our national capacity.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2012/33). The report provides us with a comprehensive picture of what clearly remains a daunting challenge for the international community. It shows that the past year has seen several new and ongoing armed conflicts in which sexual violence has been widespread and, in some instances, used by armed forces and armed groups in order to punish, humiliate and destroy civilian populations. The report also reveals worrisome emerging trends, such as the use of sexual violence in the context of political struggle, and in this context we hope that the Security Council will be able to agree on a presidential statement today.

Against this background, I would like to focus on some key messages. The first concerns the fight against impunity. As we have stated on previous occasions before this body, we cannot expect to eradicate sexual violence if we do not ensure that those who are responsible are systematically brought to justice. The message must be clear — sexual violence is not cost-free. We welcome therefore the inclusion in the report of a list of parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence. The list must become a basis for a more active engagement of the Council towards perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, including taking measures through the relevant sanctions committees, referring them to the International Criminal Court and mandating international commissions of inquiry.

Secondly, as committed as we are to targeting the perpetrators of sexual violence, we must give full priority to the health, safety and dignity of survivors. National and international programmes for postconflict reconstruction must ensure that their needs are met and voices heard. Adequate and timely resources are required to sustain processes that are meant to be lengthy and complex.

Thirdly, prevention is always key. The Secretary-General's report also serves this purpose, as it provides the information needed not only to react, but first and foremost to prevent. We look forward to the progressive strengthening of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements mandated by resolution 1960 (2010). We also encourage the adoption of national and regional early warning systems that could draw upon the United Nations Matrix of Early-Warning Indicators of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

Fourthly, there is a need to systematically include the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in the work of the Council, especially when authorizing and renewing the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions. The progressive deployment of women's protection advisers to United Nations missions is also critical.

Finally, it is necessary to include women and women's rights in peace talks. Women are formidable negotiators, mediators and peacebuilders. Their participation in preventive diplomacy is insurance against any attempt to minimize or neglect the consequences of the use of sexual violence.

Italy contributed to the drafting of resolution 1820 (2008), which first recognized the link between the systematic use of sexual violence and the maintenance of peace and security. We continue to keep this commitment high in our human rights policies. In December 2010, we adopted a three-year action plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, which places the protection of women and girls against any form of violence among its main priorities and objectives.

Let me also recall that next week the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will open its annual session. This will be an opportunity for all delegations to confirm their commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls in all circumstances, including in conflict-related situations. As a member of the Commission, Italy will not miss this opportunity.

I wish to conclude by reminding all of us of the issue at stake. The report in front of us is not just about information and numbers. It is actually about individuals, their often tragic stories and their hopes for a better future. Let us not forget that they count on us.