

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Ragolini, Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations.

Allow me to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate of the Security Council. I also wish to thank the speakers for their important and passionate statements, as well as to reiterate Italy's full support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Italy welcomes the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2106 (2013), regarding sexual violence in conflict, which signals the commitment of the Council to address an issue that is key to international peace and security.

While Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union, I wish to make the following additional remarks in my national capacity.

We appreciate the focus of this debate on impunity for crimes of sexual violence. Impunity makes those responsible for crimes confident enough to use sexual violence as a tactic of war. Impunity takes away any hope for justice from victims and survivors. Impunity is a stumbling block in rebuilding peaceful societies after conflicts. In order to make a full contribution to our discussion, I will focus on six specific points.

First, it is important that the Council be provided with timely and accurate information. Regular briefings to the Security Council by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and by UN-Women; enhancing the United Nations monitoring, analysis and reporting mechanism; and the systematic inclusion of women's protection advisers on peacekeeping and political missions could strengthen the capacity of the Council to effectively respond to impunity.

Secondly, there must be strict implementation of zero-tolerance policies towards sexual misconduct by peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding personnel. Those actors are the face of the United Nations for the people who are plagued by conflict. They must ensure the highest standards of respect for human rights and humanitarian law and be accountable for their violation.

Thirdly, sexual violence should be addressed in peace agreements. Sexual violence should be included in the definition of acts prohibited by ceasefires. The principle of no amnesty for the perpetrators for crimes of sexual violence should always be respected. The participation of women in peace negotiations and ceasefires are the best way to ensure that these issues are not traded off for other agendas.

Fourthly, national authorities should be supported in their efforts to fight against impunity. Governments have the primary responsibility to protect their populations from sexual violence and to ensure that justice is done. The international community must stand ready to provide technical assistance and capacity-building, and to help strengthen the rule of law. The United Nations has a key role to play, as proven by the work done by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. Peacekeepers should be trained and tasked with investigating crimes of sexual violence. Cooperation with civil society organizations, particularly those led by women, is also essential.

Fifthly, cooperation should be enhanced between the Security Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC), in particular when dealing with cases of sexual violence. The perpetrators of large-scale sexual violence should never benefit from differences of opinion within the Council on a specific

situation. Well-documented crimes should act as a clear basis for fast-track referrals by the Council to the ICC.

Sixthly, and lastly, comprehensive strategies are needed. While we are thoroughly committed to bringing to justice the perpetrators of sexual violence, we must give equal priority to the health, safety and the dignity of survivors. National and international programmes for post-conflict reconstruction must ensure that the needs of victims are met and their voices heard. All forms of reparation and redress must follow a victim-centred approach.

Italy has placed a high priority on the protection of women against sexual violence in its human rights policy. Last week, the Italian Parliament ratified the Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. We strongly encourage States to ratify this important instrument. Moreover, the Italian national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) includes specific provisions addressing sexual violence in conflict.

Finally, Italy will enhance its support for the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, which is the global grant-making mechanism dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls in all of its forms, including sexual violence.

To conclude, today we must all send a strong message to the perpetrators of sexual violence. They must know that sexual violence is not cost-free. The more seriously we endeavour to make this message a reality, the closer we will come to finally relegating rape in war to history books.