

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mr. Tin, Permanent Mission of Myanmar to the United Nations.

Allow me to express our appreciation to the Nigerian presidency of the Council for organizing this open debate. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian States.

Let me join the preceding speakers in condemning all forms of sexual violence against women and girls in conflict and non-conflict areas. We also commend the efforts of the United Nations in developing a broad spectrum of norms on women and peace and security for the prevention of sexual violence against vulnerable groups of women and girls across the world. My delegation also wishes to thank Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for soliciting our views while preparing the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/181) on conflict-related sexual violence and for incorporating some of our responses. We hardly need to stress the importance of the accuracy and objectivity of the information. We feel that reporting could be more balanced if it highlighted not only the problems but also the measures taken by the State concerned in response to those problems.

In Myanmar, sexual violence is a crime strongly abhorred by our traditional values and strictly forbidden by law and by our culture. As such, severe legal action is taken against the perpetrators of any reported case, whether by civilians or the members of security forces. The existing penal code strongly prescribes a severe penalty for those who have committed acts of sexual violence.

As conflict naturally breeds violence, we recognize the importance of addressing the reported problems of sexual violence that may occur in conflicts. However, incidents committed by unruly individuals cannot be construed as the policy of a given institution. The most important point is to refuse to condone any act of sexual violence.

In Myanmar, all criminal cases filed with authorities were properly investigated and the perpetrators were punished according to the law. There have been a number of cases where military personnel have been prosecuted for committing acts of sexual violence. The accusations that have been made in some quarters suggesting that the State Constitution grants immunity from prosecution to military personnel who commit criminal offences are therefore totally groundless and appear to be politically motivated. With the reformist Government now paying greater attention to promoting democratic values than ever before, members of the armed forces have been clearly instructed not to commit any crimes, including those of sexual violence. A series of capacity-building workshops has been held to educate them on human rights, and the curriculums in military training schools also include instruction on the laws relating to the prevention of sexual violence.

As a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Myanmar has taken steps to eliminate discrimination and violence against women, in line with the Convention's provisions, and we are currently implementing a 10-year national strategic plan for the advancement of women. Myanmar's three-year-old democratic reforms have also created an environment more conducive to the protection of women and girls. Our new-found freedom of expression and of the media has emboldened everyone to file complaints about any wrongful acts without fear. Any abuse of rights can be reported to our national human-rights commission. The issue of the protection of women has also attracted the attention of the legislative body, and a law banning violence against women is being drafted with the assistance of the United Nations. That important legislation is expected to be finalized for enactment very soon.

On 31 October 2013, Myanmar organized for the first time an open day on women, peace and security, commemorating resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. The event, designed to promote awareness of the issue, was attended by more than 200 participants, including senior Government and United Nations officials, parliamentarians, development cooperation partners and civil society. The Government has

also conducted surveys and research projects aimed at obtaining reliable data for facilitating effective measures against sexual violence. Seminars on violence against women are being organized in various towns across the country and counselling is also being made available to women in need of such services. In Myanmar, civil society and non-governmental organizations are now actively engaged in activities to raise awareness and prevent sexual violence. In that regard, we are also working with UN-Women and the United Nations Population Fund to implement projects designed to protect women and girls from sexual violence.

Myanmar is also making great progress in its strenuous peacemaking efforts to end its 60-year-long conflict, which have produced ceasefire agreements with almost all ethnic groups. The expected forthcoming signing of a nationwide ceasefire agreement will be a watershed in our peacebuilding process as it helps to create the conditions needed to end violence.

As much as we all condemn the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, we should also deplore the exploitation of this sensitive issue by certain groups as a tool for achieving their own political goals. The problem of sexual violence cannot be solved by an approach of naming and blaming. The international community should rather take a constructive approach by sharing information on violations and assisting Member States in their efforts to address the issue. In that regard, my delegation has noted with interest the recommendations and framework elements presented in the Secretary-General's report. We also wish to stress the importance of national ownership, leadership and responsibility in preventing sexual violence in conflict. In its exercise of that responsibility, Myanmar would welcome assistance from the United Nations in enhancing its efforts and capacity to protect women and girls from sexual violence.