

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

Statement by Mr. Shaanika, Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations.

I would like to thank the United Kingdom, Mr. President, for scheduling this important debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, Ms. Angela Joli and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar for their illuminating introductory presentations on sexual violence in conflict. Their presentations, together with the concept paper you circulated, Mr. President (S/2013/335, annex), has undoubtedly guided our deliberations today.

Sexual violence, wherever it is committed, is a crime against humanity. When committed in conflict situations, it is more than a double-edged sword for the victim. As highlighted in the concept note, this not only affects a large number of women and girls, but also men and boys. Without downplaying the impact of sexual violence on men and boys, women and girls are often more disproportionately affected because the impact of such acts and the consequences with which they have to live are often much more severe than for men and boys. However, no human being should be subjected to such a heinous and disgraceful crime. It is a pure manifestation of evil that cannot be justified or tolerated in the twenty-first century.

In conflict situations, the dignity of women and girls must be respected; they cannot be treated as subhuman. First, they are human beings endowed with the right to pursue happiness in every possible way. Secondly, they are grandmothers, mothers, wives, sisters and little girls in the eyes of their parents and in their communities in general. In conflict situations too, the family bond remains and it must be accorded adequate protection.

My country has made its modest contribution to the issue of women in peace. During Namibia's presidency of the Council in October 2000, a discussion was initiated and an open debate held (see S/PV.4213) that culminated in the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). The Council has also adopted resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), which highlight the seriousness of sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security. The urgent question confronting the international community today is, what are the appropriate strategies to end sexual violence in conflict?

The international justice mechanism should support the restoration or establishment of justice and accountability at the national level. The empowerment of women and girls, as well as the education of boys about the rights of girls and women, are some of important elements that instil nurturing and responsible behavioural patterns. We welcome the call by the Group of Eight for urgent action to address impunity and to hold perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflicts accountable. There can be no sympathy for any person or group of persons who commit sexual violence anywhere. My delegation acknowledges the important role that the Council plays by encouraging the development of joint Government-United Nations comprehensive strategies on combating sexual violence.

We encourage the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to work with Governments and armed groups to seek their commitment to becoming accountable in the quest to prevent sexual violence. We also support the proposal to deploy women's protection advisers to United Nations missions, as well as to address sexual violence in the context of security sector reform. Furthermore, my delegation supports the establishment of a mechanism to monitor commitments by parties to a conflict, including issuing clear orders through the chains of command and enacting codes of conduct prohibiting sexual violence. Those who have been identified and proved beyond a reasonable doubt to have perpetrated or condoned acts of sexual violence should in future be excluded from any security institutions, or from holding positions of influence. Specific measures to

impose targeted sanctions on those committing or condoning sexual violence should be taken against the perpetrators. When the use of legal mechanisms are insufficient to fight against sexual violence in the quest for justice, reforms in the administration of justice and the legislative process may become necessary.

While this debate is mainly addressing issues of sexual violence, we must also focus our attention beyond the realm of conflict periods. However, we are concerned about the continued low representation of women in all structures and phases of the peacebuilding processes. In spite of the disproportionate impact of conflict on women, they continue to hold their families and communities together, often undertaking initiatives between warring factions under extremely difficult conditions. When included in formal peace processes, they bring their experiences to bear on the parties. It is therefore imperative that they be included at all peacebuilding levels.

It is unfortunate that, more often than not, the efforts of women are insufficiently recognized and supported, both politically and financially. As a result, women's rights are rarely integrated into peace agreements or post-conflict support structures.

In conclusion, my delegation urges the Security Council to act expeditiously on the information presented to it. The paramount consideration should be that more needs to be done to protect women and girls and men and boys from the scourge of sexual violence. I support the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.