

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

23rd February 2012, Security Council Chamber

*Statement by H.E. Mr. Acharya, Representative of the Nepali Permanent Mission to the UN.*

Mr. Acharya (Nepal): My delegation wishes to express its sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for organizing this important open debate on women and peace and security.

Resolution 1820 (2008) and the subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security emphasize, inter alia, the importance of working concertedly for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, particularly sexual violence during and after conflict. Some progress has been recorded in various aspects by Member States, the United Nations system and civil society organizations in the implementation of the Council's resolutions on women and peace and security.

Yet, there is a long way to go to realize the noble goals laid down in the resolutions. It is unacceptable that, even in the twenty-first century, women and girls are abused sexually as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate and instil fear in civilian members of a community. There is a need for a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained effort to end sexual violence and to protect and promote women's rights during and after conflict, as it requires several immediate measures as well as longer-term reforms in policing, judicial systems and entire socio-cultural belief systems to ensure a dignified place for women in society.

The report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/2012/33 gives the impression that no action has been taken against perpetrators of sexual violence in Nepal. That is not corroborated by facts on the ground. Perpetrators of sexual violence have been punished by the judiciary. Although there are some individual cases, let me also make it clear that sexual violence was never used as a policy of coercion by either of the parties during the conflict in Nepal.

Allow me to address the issue of women in promoting peace and security and what we have been trying to do to enhance the empowerment of women in general in the post-conflict situation. Nepal has come a long way after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006 in terms of ensuring women's participation at the decision-making level. The election S/PV.6722 (Resumption 1) 14 12-23937 of women to one-third of the seats in Parliament has sent a very strong signal about the unprecedented equality and empowerment of women, with deep reverberations of change in Nepalese society.

Nepal has accorded high priority to the implementation of the many Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security as we move from conflict to durable peace, stability and economic development. In that context, Nepal is proud to stand with its distinctive five-year national action plan for the effective implementation of the Council's resolutions on women and peace and security. We have already started the implementation of our national action plan through a multi-pronged approach whereby Parliament, Government ministries, judiciaries, political parties and civil society are involved in their respective areas. That will ensure the meaningful participation by women at all levels of the decisionmaking process of governance, including in conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes. We have also put in place mechanisms at the local level, together with some strong monitoring mechanisms, to follow up on implementation. We welcome the genuine partnership and collaboration of the international community in our endeavour. In that regard, we reiterate our conviction that partnership and cooperation must be forged for building and promoting national capacity.

Nepal has taken a number of initiatives to take care of the special needs of women and bring them forward. It is mandatory that women participate at a rate of at least 33 per cent in the constitution of local peace committees at the district level, which are empowered to address post-conflict-related issues at the local level. Nepal has been implementing gender-based budgeting for some years, through which gender mainstreaming has been getting special attention in all development activities. Nepal has introduced a policy of affirmative action in various areas, including in the civil service, with a view to ensuring that women participate at the decision-making level in the public sector.

We have adopted various measures to fight against sexual and gender-based violence, notably by establishing of a follow-up office in the Office of the Prime Minister, a gender violence prevention fund, and gender violence control committees in all 75 districts of the country. We are committed to expanding women and children service centres in police stations across the country to ensure the expeditious investigation and the prosecution of cases of sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, we are committed not only to increasing the number of women in our army and police force, but also to contributing an increasing number of them to United Nations peacekeeping operations. We have integrated the essential portion of courses on the protection of women and girls from sexual violence during and after conflict in our peacekeeping training package. Nepal is fully aware of the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy and has expressed its commitment to fully supporting the endeavour.

While moving from conflict to durable peace and stability, Nepal is taking this transformative phase as an opportunity for creating and inculcating new values into Nepali society, where all women and men participate in the nation-building processes in an equal footing.

In conclusion, we all have to enhance our efforts in a coordinated way to end sexual violence and to ensure the empowerment of women in all spheres of life. An enhanced level of support, collaboration and cooperation from the international community would go a long way towards ensuring the early realization of our common objectives, as expressed in the Council's resolutions.