

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. McLay, Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations.

I thank the Secretary-General and Special Representative Bangura for their statements. I will deliver an abridged version of my statement in the interests of time; the full text will be distributed in the Chamber.

New Zealand congratulates Rwanda, in particular its Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was with us today, for taking the lead on this very important issue in the Council. Rwanda is following in a proud tradition of several African countries that, during their presidencies, have been willing to stand up in the Council and highlight those problems, even though there are some, as we know, who would prefer that the Council spent its time on other matters.

It is important that, yet again, Rwanda is demonstrating African leadership on an African problem. We also join Portugal in the message that it sent to the victims of sexual violence. We think that that should be a message sent by the whole of the international community.

The issue of sexual violence in conflict is a global problem, and in recent years its gravity has been demonstrated, in many cases, in Africa, most recently in places not far from Rwanda. Sexual violence in conflict is as complex as it is horrifying. Its occurrence does not necessarily correspond with the intensity of the related armed violence: in low-intensity conflicts and post-conflict situations, women and children can be at as great a risk of sexual violence as during the height of hostilities. That complexity requires that the Council carefully craft its responses in addressing and focusing on sexual violence in conflict.

In that connection, we are all the more pleased to note from the assessment in the Security Council Report cross-cutting report entitled *Women, Peace and Security: Violence in Conflict and Sanctions* that, despite ongoing controversy at the thematic level, the Council has, in country-specific situations, continued to apply the substance of the principles that it had previously developed on women and peace and security. That is good news.

Even better news is the assessment that there seems to be an emerging trend, when new problems emerge, as recently they did in Mali and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to have explicit women peace and security language incorporated into mandates at the outset of a mission. We urge that that trend continue. Looking ahead, there is still great scope for improvement in the Council's work in particular cases, as is well illustrated by the experience in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where many women and children have suffered serious sexual violence.

Sanctions can, in appropriate cases, play an important role in combating sexual violence. The recent actions of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with regard to listing entities responsible for sexual violence and explicitly linking the listing to sexual violence, is an important signal that carefully crafted and targeted sanctions will be used to combat the most serious and systematic incidents of sexual violence in conflict. The Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the Mouvement du 23 mars have now been listed by the Committee, and that sends a very important signal. However, the Council should ensure that the criteria for listing are regularly updated and harmonized across the various regimes.

The Council should move to implement the Secretary-General's recommendation that similar powers be given to the Committees responsible for Somalia, the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and Al-Qaida in

Islamic Maghreb. It would be a useful step to add Guinea-Bissau to that list as well.

The deployment of peacekeepers with an explicit mandate to protect civilians from sexual violence has been a very important step. But the challenge is to ensure that such deployment delivers results effectively in the field. Peacekeepers must be supported with appropriate training and resources to enable them to fulfil their protection mandate. We note, for example, that the Intervention Brigade in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is specifically mandated, in resolution 2098 (2013), to contribute to civilian security, which necessarily includes protection from sexual violence.

We ask that MONUSCO's intervention operations be carefully monitored by the Council. Combat operations are inherently risky for civilian populations, no matter how principled the motivation, whether Blue Helmet or not. We must remember the recent reports in the Kivus about retreating troops committing extensive acts of rape and sexual violence. It is clear that, all too often in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, instability resulting from the use of force has helped create a climate that leads to sexual violence. Too often in the past, the Security Council has been caught off balance by outrages against civilians. The experience in the Democratic Republic of the Congo shows that the Council should, and can, find better ways to maintain appropriate engagement so as to enable the proper management of those risks. The host country, regional actors, regional and subregional organizations and troop-contributing countries must all be involved to ensure the best outcome in protecting civilian populations and reducing the incidence of sexual violence.

Just as many Member States have assiduously addressed sexual violence in their domestic environments, so, too, must the international community be equally resolved to make good on its commitment to protect populations from that all-too-prevalent scourge. It can do that through the actions and decisions — and with the support — of the Council.