

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

I shall now make a statement in my national capacity. I would first like to join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his insightful report (S/2014/181), which has provided this important debate with ample guidance. I would also like to express our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zainab Hawa Bangura for her determined and enduring efforts to ensure global involvement in the fight against the abhorrent crimes of rape and sexual violence, especially in conflict.

Those present will all agree with me that Ms. Rhoda Misaka stirred our conscience this morning with her impassioned statement. She reveals the horror of sexual violence in conflict and invites us to fight this barbarism — more than barbarism — with unrelenting determination and commitment. We want to thank her and say that we support her in her work.

Nigeria takes note of the highlights of the Secretary-General's report, including the actions taken by States and the challenges confronting them in conflict and post-conflict situations in preventing sexual violence.

We welcome the broad-based consultations that guided the report's preparation, which involved United Nations entities in the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, field missions and country teams, all concerned Member States and non-governmental organizations. We acknowledge the important work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We encourage Member States to draw on their expertise in strengthening the rule of law and the capacities of civilian and military justice systems.

That is all part of a broader effort to strengthen institutional safeguards against impunity for conflict-related sexual violence. Donors should be encouraged to ensure sustainable funding for this valuable resource for the countries concerned. Nigeria shares the Secretary-General's view that the lack of capacity remains one of the major impediments to ensuring accountability, which leads to widespread impunity. In turn, that has a detrimental impact on access to justice and the security and safety of survivors. It is evident that survivors' access to justice can be hindered by restrictions on physical access and inadequate legislation, or, indeed, by the financial and social costs associated with reporting and pursuing justice for crimes of sexual violence. Regrettably, many countries lack legal aid services and protocols for the protection of victims and witnesses, and an already weakened criminal justice system amplifies the lack of access to justice. We are pleased to note that United Nations actors, including the Team of Experts, continue to support national authorities in that regard.

It is a matter of concern, as highlighted in the report, that the prevalence of sexual violence during a conflict often leaves not only an impact but especially bitter memories, with acute consequences for the security of women and children even when peace has been restored. That may ultimately have a direct bearing on the durability of peace and prospects for sustainable development.

With that in mind, the time has come for us to redouble our efforts in the fight against the scourge and to hold all perpetrators accountable. That is the consensus in the Chamber.

The Security Council demonstrated leadership in that regard in June 2013, by adopting resolution 2106 (2013), which underscores the need for more systematic monitoring of sexual violence in armed conflict. It is therefore imperative that the Council develop appropriate response mechanisms and consistently improve existing ones to ensure the participation of women in all aspects of mediation, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding.

We acknowledge the critical role of women protection advisers within human rights and women's empowerment and gender units in peacekeeping operations.

At the global level there is now unprecedented commitment and momentum on the application of all the relevant Security Council resolutions. The international community must sustain that momentum. As part of those accomplishments, we believe that a great deal more needs to be done to implement commitments on women and peace and security. For example, there is a need for increased sex-disaggregated data on security threats in order to contribute to greater security for women.

My country welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations that outline critical elements for the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, specific actions required at political and operational levels and the need for national ownership, leadership and responsibility.

The determination to tackle sexual violence in conflict is not confined to the United Nations. At the regional level, under the auspices of the African Union, the African Solidarity Initiative held a high-level meeting in October 2013 on preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict countries and beyond. That consultation was organized under key international policy and action frameworks, particularly resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1), the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, the protocol on the prevention and suppression of sexual violence against women and children and the 2009 African Union gender policy. The meeting was aimed at significantly reducing and eliminating sexual violence and accelerating the implementation of agreed responses, especially those related to prevention and protection and victims' access to care and justice.

At the subregional level in West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has also put in place strong mechanisms with regard to the role of women in conflict prevention and management. Those include the protocol on conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security and the supplementary protocol on democracy and good governance. Those mechanisms form the basis of the ECOWAS conflict-prevention framework.

The women and peace and security component of the framework is aimed at consolidating women's role, participation and impact at all stages of conflict management, including humanitarian provisions, while reinforcing various national and regional mechanisms on their protection and promotion.

Other regional initiatives of that nature include the women's network for peace and security in the ECOWAS region; the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding; the Movement against Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa; and the Alliance of African Initiatives for peace and stability in West Africa.

At national level, through the Law Reform Commission and the Federal Ministry of Justice, Nigeria has initiated reforms in the criminal justice system to ensure the delivery of gender justice in law and practice. Bills on addressing gender equality and all forms of violence against women and girls have been sponsored at both the federal and state level. Strident steps have been taken at the national level to ensure the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In the same vein, Nigeria stresses the importance of compliance with resolution 1820 (2008), on ending acts of sexual violence against women in conflict.

Nigeria fully embraces the adoption of political commitments to prevent sexual violence in conflict, namely, the historic declarations adopted by the Group of Eight countries in April 2013 and the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which has been signed by more than 140 nations. We believe that Member States should implement those commitments as a matter of high priority. Member States that have yet to sign that important Declaration should be encouraged to do so before the October deadline — about six months from now.

It is critical for States to focus collectively on converting the political commitments into concrete preventive action, particularly at national level. It is in that spirit that Nigeria today, in this forum, declares its intention

to sign on to that laudable initiative as a means of demonstrating its unwavering commitment to the fight against sexual violence and all its ramifications.