

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

Statement by Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary General the United Nations.

Thank you very much, Madam President, for convening this important meeting on conflict-related sexual violence, an issue of grave importance to the innumerable civilians who have been affected, to all of us around the table and to the entire United Nations system. I welcome Rwanda's initiative and your presence here today. I also thank the Security Council for its recognition of this matter as a serious concern for international peace and security.

Wartime rape not only destroys individual lives, it lays waste to families and communities. It is also an impediment to reconciliation and sustainable development. Thanks to the Council, the world now has a solid framework for preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) help guide the work of United Nations agencies, Member States and other stakeholders. My dynamic and persuasive Special Representative on this issue carries out global advocacy.

Other important actors and tools include the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the women protection advisers and the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements. The report now before the Council (S/2013/149) reflects the progressive improvement of analysis and data over the past few years, which is a direct result of greater awareness on the ground and the strengthened capacities of missions to monitor, investigate and respond.

As we learn more about sexual violence used as a tactic of war, certain patterns are becoming clear. One is that the negative effects of wartime rape persist long after the guns fall silent. From the Balkans to Africa, United Nations entities and others continue to provide vital medical and psychosocial support to victims and survivors. Another pattern we see is that, although this vicious crime disproportionately affects women and girls, men and boys are also targeted.

My Special Representative has also noted other emerging trends, including the link between conflict-related sexual violence and the illegal exploitation of natural resources; the impact of sexual violence on displacement; and the importance of addressing sexual violence during ceasefire negotiations, wider peace processes and security-sector reform efforts. Building on the work of her predecessor and of the 13-entity United Nations Action against Sexual Violence network, which she chairs, my Special Representative has continued to fight impunity for conflict-related sexual violence. Ms. Bangura has stressed prosecution as a means of prevention. But she has also emphasized the importance of national ownership and leadership, which I fully support.

The prosecution support cells in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, created by the Government with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are a positive example of combining the two approaches. Other peacekeeping operations intend to carry out similar projects. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region also represents an opportunity to address the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence.

Ultimately, however, we must strengthen our collective efforts to prevent sexual violence in the first place.

Our peacekeeping missions in the Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with United Nations country teams, are working to establish monitoring, analysis and

reporting arrangements. That is a priority that I hope we can accomplish before the end of the year.

Together with tools such as the updated human rights database of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the protection monitoring project of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other information systems, we will be better placed to systematically identify trends and patterns, and thereby become better at preventing these crimes.

The sustainability of that work requires funding. We have now deployed eight women protection advisers in South Sudan, where the United Nations Mission in South Sudan is the first peace mission to budget for and appoint such advisers. We are also recruiting advisers for our missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic. I call on Member States to provide adequate resources for the deployment of additional advisers in those and other situations of concern. We must make this a regular feature of planning and budgeting.

I would also like to call for sustained funding for the Team of Experts that works to strengthen the capacity of national rule of law and justice actors. The Team has worked with the authorities in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia and South Sudan, and could do even more with the necessary backing.

Preventing sexual violence is first and foremost a responsibility of States, in particular of security forces, which are often the perpetrators of that grave human rights violation. But prevention is also a collective responsibility. To succeed, we must use all the tools at our disposal. That includes our peacekeeping and political missions, our mediation efforts and our efforts

to protect human rights and deliver humanitarian assistance. It also encompasses the work of all those involved in building peace in the aftermath of conflict — from restoring the rule of law and advancing gender equality to promoting early recovery and longer-term development. As we deepen that effort, I look forward to the Council's sustained leadership and support.