

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Marn, Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the United Nations.*

I would like to thank all of the briefers in today's debate for their powerful messages, which the Security Council should take into account in its future deliberations. I would also like to thank the United Kingdom for organizing this important and timely debate, while acknowledging their important contribution to combating sexual violence in conflict situations during its tenure leading the Group of Eight. I would also like to commend Australia and Guatemala for organizing an Arria formula meeting on experiences drawn from the work of gender experts in peacekeeping operations. Slovenia joins others in welcoming resolution 2106 (2013) adopted this morning. Slovenia also fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

One of the key priorities of Slovenia in the United Nations is to address issues of importance to women around the world. It has been acknowledged many times that global stability, peace, and prosperity depend on protecting and advancing the rights of women and girls. But many times we find ourselves too late in implementing preventive measures, which may include efforts to promote the rights of women or other means, and find ourselves in the midst of armed conflicts, where particularly vulnerable groups, such as women and children, are disproportionately impacted.

Needless to say, in such circumstances social norms get stripped away and sexual attacks all too often become a weapon of war. Such violence leaves behind hundreds of thousands of victims, all of whom are left traumatized and stigmatized for life. Those hideous acts affect whole communities and remain vividly remembered for generations, as seen in the Western Balkans and Rwanda.

It is therefore of paramount importance to look beyond prevention. The investigation of cases of sexual violence in conflict and the holding of perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflict accountable are also of great importance. Ending impunity is pivotal in addressing sexual violence in conflict. Only that can serve as a strong deterrent for such actions. In that regard, we would like to commend the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as Justice Rapid Response, an intergovernmental standby facility of active-duty criminal justice and related professionals.

The International Criminal Court is the only international tribunal whose statute explicitly refers to sexual and gender violence as crimes against humanity. The use of the Court in such cases should be an important aspect of establishing peace and security and the rule of law, whereby special attention should be given to the principle of complementarity and to the issue of closing the legal gaps regarding accountability for the most serious international crimes. However, the most important area of focus must remain the victims.

Let us recall that Slovenia, together with Netherlands and Belgium, presented an initiative aimed at improving the international framework for mutual legal assistance and extradition in cases involving the investigation and prosecution of the most serious crimes of international concern, including sexual and gender violence as crimes against humanity. As suspects, evidence, witnesses and assets related to those crimes are usually not restricted to the territory of any one State, strengthening mutual legal assistance between States is indispensable for States, if they are to be truly effective in the national prosecution and investigation of those crimes.

Finally, let me inform the Council that these pertinent issues will also be on the agenda of the Bled Strategic Forum, a high-level strategic dialogue among leaders from the private and public sectors to be held in Slovenia in early September of 2013. A panel discussion entitled "International criminal

justice as a precondition for a prosperous economic future?” will be organized, and it will, *inter alia*, address the issue of sexual and gender violence, with a particular emphasis on violence against women and children. We see the meeting as an opportunity to continue this important dialogue and also as a sign of my country’s continuous involvement in matters that promote women’s rights.