

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, (Conflict Related Sexual Violence)
23 February 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E Mr. Obin, Permanent Representative of Togo

I would like first to join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2012/33) on conflict-related sexual violence. I would also like to thank Ms. Margot Wallström for her praiseworthy work on the issue and Mr. Hervé Ladsous for the useful efforts that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) continues to make in this sphere. I would further like to thank to the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for her organization's cutting-edge work to combat violence against women and girls.

United Nations efforts to eradicate sexual violence in armed conflict deserve recognition, as they make an important contribution to restoring peace and security in countries in conflict and to the essential process of reconciliation. Indeed, the suffering inflicted on women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict situations remains a source of serious concern insofar as it undermines the process of reconciliation. Sexual violence is manifested in rape, sexual slavery, prostitution, pregnancy, forced sterilization and any other form of sexual violence of comparable seriousness. Such acts, committed in conflict or post-conflict situations or in other crisis situations, constitute serious violations of human rights and are all the more deplorable for their impact on people who are already vulnerable.

My country welcomed the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which defines the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding. The national action plans that Member States are called upon to draw up pursuant to that resolution seem to be the most effective means for attaining the goals of the resolution.

In that spirit, Togo has drafted an action plan to combat all forms of violence against women. My country has established nationwide support centres for women victims of violence. For 10 years now, my country has also participated in 16 days of campaigning organized from 25 November to 10 December every year. As a troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Togo has also created a pre-deployment centre where military and police personnel in training are made aware of the strict prohibition of all forms of sexual violence.

In addition to those measures, which are aimed at preventing violence against women in conflict, my country reiterates the urgent need to put an end to impunity if we are to ensure that every society in the thrall of conflict, wherever it may be, draws lessons from the atrocities committed against civilians and prevents such atrocities from being repeated. In that regard, Togo welcomes the steps taken by the Secretary-General to ensure that the zero-tolerance policy regarding exploitation and sexual violence in United Nations peacekeeping operations, in conformity with paragraph 7 of resolution 1820 (2008), does not remain an empty term.

My country also supports the main initiatives launched by the United Nations to combat sexual violence in times of conflict, as set out in the report. These efforts include scenario-based pre-deployment training modules on preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence; analysis of early warning signs of sexual violence in times of conflict, with the aim of integrating that analysis into existing and emerging early warning and prevention systems to facilitate a rapid response; and addressing conflict related sexual violence in ceasefire and peace agreements.

To combat and especially to deter the perpetration of such acts, Togo believes that the countries concerned must build an arsenal of justice, such as national or hybrid criminal courts and tribunals,

turning, if necessary to the International Criminal Court, with scrupulous respect for the principle of complementarity, which maintains the primacy of national jurisdictions.

My country also believes that the affected countries could resort to extrajudicial mechanisms and methods of reconciliation, that is, to truth, justice and reconciliation commissions and roundtables. These mechanisms can help not only to solidify the principle of the individual responsibility of perpetrators of serious crimes, but also to promote peace, truth, reconciliation and the rights of victims.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Togo's support for the presidential statement to be adopted at the conclusion of this debate. My country wishes to renew its thanks to the United States delegation for its work in that regard.