

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Kandangha-Bariki, Permanent Mission of Togo to the United Nations.

Mr. President, I want to thank your country, the United Kingdom, for having organized today's debate on the theme "Women and peace and security", especially sexual violence in armed conflict, and to welcome your presence among us to lead our work. I also welcome the Ministers of France, Guatemala and Morocco. Their presence in this debate reflects the interest that their countries attach to this alarming issue.

I also thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Bangura, Ms. Angelina Jolie and Ms. Jane Adong Anywar for their respective briefings.

I also thank the United States delegation for its leadership in the preparation and negotiation of resolution 2106 (2013), which we have just adopted.

Women and girls continue to be the victims of violence of all kinds during and after armed conflict, despite all the efforts being made to prevent it. The emergence of new armed groups in old conflicts, such as those in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, and the emergence of new conflicts, such as those in Mali and Syria, have undoubtedly increased the number of women and girl victims of sexual violence. These armed groups, with their generally undisciplined fighters, engage in countless acts of violence that constitute crimes under international law. We cannot exonerate national armed forces from such human rights violations, since they too harbour so-called rogue elements who commit the same abuses as those committed by armed rebel groups, particularly rape, which has now become a tactic common to all belligerents.

As we noted in our statement on this issue in April under the Rwandan presidency (see S/PV.6948), the main underlying causes of the violence include poverty, poor governance, the democratic deficit, revenge and the desire for racial domination and to impose one's culture or religion. This reality is common to all countries in conflict, and such problems should be taken into account by all Governments while their countries enjoy peace and stability.

There can be no doubt that atrocities against women and girls will continue to be committed if their authors have no fear of being caught and if aggressors are not prosecuted and punished. We believe that verbal condemnations and promises to act are no longer enough. We must go further by seeking to further educate not only military and Government leaders, but also rebel movements. Raising awareness among the commanders of these forces on the protection of civilians, respect for international legal instruments, humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as the effective implementation of relevant agreements, should be favored and supported.

Peace missions are already working in these areas, and we thank them for it. However, we believe that capacity-building would contribute further towards that goal. We stress and welcome the particular role of women's protection advisers and gender advisers in peacekeeping operations, as was highlighted at the Arria formula meeting of 17 May organized by Australia and Guatemala under the Togolese presidency of the Security Council. These advisers should be present in all peace missions.

We must address the issue of impunity through the adoption of strict provisions. In this regard, the United Nations should assist States in developing or establishing mechanisms of cooperation through bilateral or regional agreements for the arrest and extradition of alleged perpetrators of violence against women and girls. and by strengthening the capacity of national courts, whose

weaknesses with respect to this issue tend to perpetuate the violence.

However, we believe that if the fight against impunity is to succeed, we must establish effective cooperation between national and international courts, and between them and States, including in the enforcement of arrest warrants and other decisions. All too often, unfortunately, we note a lack of political will in that regard. We must remember that every State must try and prosecute the perpetrators of serious human rights violations on its territory. States must cooperate to that end.

Women and girls are the primary victims of violations of their fundamental human rights in armed conflict. They must therefore be part of the solution. As the French representative has pointed out, they must be stakeholders and not passive subjects. It is therefore important to involve them in every mediation and peacebuilding process in the aftermath of conflict. We welcome the Security Council's commitment to ensuring the greater involvement and higher numbers of women in peacekeeping operations so that they can play a significant role in victim protection.

Despite all the difficulties and the need to ensure the protection of women and girls in armed conflict and to prosecute their attackers, there is still the hope that combating such violence will succeed thanks to the commitment and efforts of the international community. We wish to commend the efforts of UN-Women, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and many international and non-governmental organizations to that end. However, their advocacy must include a plea for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty, because its implementation by all States, particularly those where weapons are manufactured, could make a big contribution to ending the sale and illegal trafficking of arms in countries in conflict. Such weapons fuel conflict and violence, particularly against women and girls.