

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict-Affected Situations, October 18th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Çevik, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on Azerbaijan's accession to the presidency of the Security Council this month. Turkey welcomes the adoption of resolution 2122 (2013) on women, peace and security by the Council earlier today.

I would like to commend the United Nations team of experts on the rule of law and sexual violence for their valuable work.

Sexual violence in armed conflicts, from the early stages of conflict to its aftermath, is one of the gravest human rights abuses committed against women and girls. In situations of conflict, sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war — a strategy to deprive human beings of their most basic rights, their safety, security and dignity. Sexual violence can exacerbate and prolong armed conflicts and may impede the restoration of international peace and security, as posited in many relevant Security Council resolutions to date.

We welcome the fact that the international community has been paying increasing attention to the crime of sexual violence in conflict. The Security Council has hosted many debates on the issue and addressed the crucial issues of transitional justice, capacity-building and the rule of law. International and regional organizations are devoting more attention to this topic.

The draft decision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Council on the OSCE action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which Turkey is sponsoring together with Austria, Finland and Kazakhstan, is a recent example of this. Turkey was also glad to join in the launch of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict at the ministerial level on the sidelines of the General Assembly's general debate.

However, despite all those efforts, sexual violence in armed conflict remains one of the most neglected crimes. Sadly, the situation in Syria, just across our border, is a vivid example of that. Turkey echoes the condemnation voiced very recently by the Council of the acts of sexual and gender-based violence and abuse taking place in Syria. However, as we most regretfully know, a culture of impunity tends to prevail in conflicts and in post-conflict situations. Violators are not adequately punished, if punished at all. Victims lack sufficient access to justice, physical and psychological treatment or support. Those suffering sexual violence often find it difficult to speak out, especially in situations of prolonged conflict.

Today's debate serves to highlight the strong will power of the international community to combat sexual violence in conflict. Now is time to focus on the ways and means to do so by sharing best practices and talking about specific measures that can be adopted. In that sense, we find the focus of today's debate on the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict situations extremely useful, and would like to thank the Azerbaijani presidency for convening it.

The elimination of the root causes of conflict is the best way to prevent sexual violence and to address impunity. Combating impunity is possible only by building transparent, effective, non-discriminatory and functioning institutions and justice systems. It is vital to ensure that women and girls have access to judicial institutions and proper representation. We in the international community should pursue our efforts to support gender-sensitive judicial reform and capacity-building. It is important to provide gender expertise in peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding efforts, as well as to ensure the participation of women in those efforts.

The health sector is another area that should be strengthened to deal with sexual violence in armed conflict. Rehabilitation to address the mental, physical and psychological trauma suffered by women and girls should not be delayed, so that they can move on and rebuild their lives.

Combating sexual violence is an issue that should also be dealt with on a broader societal scale. As individuals

and groups from all sectors of society raise their voices higher against this atrocity, we will all be able to stand stronger in our struggle. That requires a need for stronger interaction with civil society, grass- roots institutions and women's organizations, as well as the private sector and the media.

A significant number of peace agreements fail within the first five years of signature. Among the various reasons for this outcome, the lack of inclusiveness is evident. The full, equal and meaningful participation of women at the decision-making level is crucial for assuring that the political, social and economic outcomes of peace talks and mediation efforts address their specific issues and concerns.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Security Council, member States and all relevant United Nations bodies, in addition to all relevant stakeholders at the local, national, regional and global levels that have made the issue of sexual violence against women in conflict a priority.

Our special thanks goes to the Special Representative Bangura, whose exemplary dedication

in fighting against sexual violence in conflicts, including combating impunity, we continue to admire and strongly support.