

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

Statement by Ms. Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Permanent Mission of the United States to the United Nations.

Thank you, Madam President, for organizing this event and for your presence today. Let me also thank you for the expressions of sympathy to the American people. I'd also like to thank Secretary-General Ban, Special Representative Bangura for their briefings, and Madame Keita for helping us better understand how women in Mali are combating sexual violence. Women's civil society organizations are making critical contributions in this area and need our support.

Madame President, we welcome the Secretary General's report on sexual violence in conflict. Tragically, the report and today's briefings remind us that this issue is a global problem. It is also complex and multifaceted, from sexual violence used as a tool for coercive population displacement to forced marriages by armed groups to the challenges of widespread unreporting of abuse and the plight of children born out of rape.

Today, I would like to draw attention to the need for greater emphasis on prevention, including at the communal level and within the UN system for engaging parties to conflict to address sexual violence and for integrating sexual violence prevention and response efforts into security and justice sector reform.

At the community level, improving prevention of sexual violence requires better understanding of existing protection mechanisms and leveraging grassroots networks that can provide local information to inform prevention efforts. There is progress in this area, for example, the Community Policing Centers run by displaced persons in camps in Darfur and the enlistment of imams as advocates for sexual violence prevention in South Darfur.

For UN missions, better prevention involves equipping peacekeepers and civilian staff with the guidance and expertise to respond to early information about threats of large-scale abuses. The training modules designed by the United Nations are a positive step in that direction, as is the creation of the UN International Network of Female Police Peacekeepers, which links over a thousand UN female police officers around the world to share best practices as well as advocate and mentor female police.

Bringing deeper gender expertise to UN field missions is essential for enhanced prevention of sexual violence. UN leadership in New York and in the field should commit to greater presence of gender experts and women protection advisors in UN missions. Furthermore, the deployment of such experts should be routine in UN technical assessment missions. We note the particular need for this expertise in Libya to address the root causes of sexual violence perpetrated during the conflict and the resulting trauma.

Encouraging parties to conflict to discuss sexual violence within their ranks, though challenging, is another critical avenue of prevention. The agreements that Special Representative Bangura brokered in the Central African Republic are models of this engagement. Changing behavior of armed parties requires political will as well as better monitoring and reporting and, where appropriate, the credible threat of consequences, such as "naming and shaming" and sanctions. Furthermore, mediators and envoys should routinely address conflict-related sexual violence in their ceasefire and peace negotiations.

But the spectrum of action for countering sexual violence must not be limited to the conflict and its conclusion. It must be prioritized throughout peace processes, including in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration phase and in security sector reform. Rigorous vetting should ensure that perpetrators and those who have directed sexual violence are denied entry to the security sector. There should be strong protection mechanisms for civilians in close proximity of cantonment sites. The best way to ensure these protections is for women themselves to participate meaningfully in SSR and DDR program design and implementation and to have more women working and leading in the security sector. It is clear that female survivors of sexual violence are more likely to report to a female police officer or a women's police station, as our experience in Haiti has borne out. And women's civil society organizations need greater capacity to monitor, inform, and provide security services in conjunction with law enforcement authorities.

We must also build reformed national justice sectors and local institutions that can hold accountable those responsible for sexual violence while international criminal justice mechanisms continue to play their important role in ending impunity for these crimes. In last week's Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, the G8 reaffirmed that rape and other forms of serious sexual violence in armed conflict are war crimes and emphasized the need to promote justice and accountability for such crimes.

These issues are hardly theoretical. The scourge of sexual violence persists. We are alarmed by horrific abuses occurring in Syria, including against men and boys, and we reaffirm that those responsible for violations of international law and human rights will be held accountable. The United States continues to support the documenting of evidence of atrocities committed by all sides for use in future Syrian-led transitional justice and accountability processes. Beyond Syria, the United States has proven its commitment to prevent and address gender-based violence around the world, providing more than \$100 million in 2012 to these efforts.

In closing, I want to commend the excellent work Special Representative Bangura and her staff are doing, and urge the entire UN system to give due attention to prevention efforts and facilitate the deployment of necessary expertise to conflict areas. The United States looks forward to continuing collaboration with all those who seek to end the scourge of sexual violence in conflict, including through a new Council resolution to address outstanding challenges on these issues.

Thank you, Madame President.