

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Resolution 1820
Thursday, June 19, 2008

Statement by H.E Mr. Le Luong Minh, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations

I thank you, Mr. President, and the United States delegation for convening this important debate on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict as a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, an issue to which my country attaches great importance. I thank Secretary of State Rice for personally presiding over the Council's deliberations earlier today. I also thank Their Excellencies the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly for their participation and their statements.

Commitments to resolve the issue of sexual violence against women are contained in major documents such as the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (General Assembly resolution 60/1), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These, together with the 2008 adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 62/134 on "Eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations" and the Secretary-General's launch this year of a multi-year global campaign to end violence against women, manifest the concern of Member States about the widespread nature of this type of inhumane acts against the "better half" of humankind as well as their determination to tackle it.

My delegation is deeply concerned by the grave sexual violence in many conflict areas, which continues to occur despite repeated strong condemnation and calls for the parties concerned to take measures to prevent and put an end to such acts, whose consequences are not only the personal suffering of women and girls, but very often also the breakdown of their families and the spread of contagious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which adversely affect whole communities and their post-conflict reconstruction processes. The consequences are even more severe when victims are under-age girls.

Viet Nam holds the view that the most effective way to protect women and girls from sexual violence, including sexual violence in armed conflict, is to empower women and girls, help them understand their fundamental rights and raise their awareness and their capacity to protect themselves. We fully endorse the women's empowerment and advancement measures set out in the Beijing Platform for Action. As sexual violence, including sexual violence in armed conflict situations, has been a major topic intensively debated by other pertinent United Nations bodies, it is important to enhance the efficiency of those existing mechanisms and improve coordination and cooperation between the Security Council and those bodies, while avoiding duplication of their work.

The inter-agency United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict should serve as a tool to enhance such coordination. At the same time, we must make sure that any new mechanism to be established will be given careful consideration so as not to create unnecessary administrative and financial burdens for Member States and United Nations agencies.

I wish to further emphasize that States bear the primary responsibility to protect their own civilians and deal with violence against them, including sexual violence.

As far as peacekeeping missions are concerned, we support the recommendation contained in the draft resolution presented for adoption by the Council today that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group and relevant States, develop and implement appropriate training programmes for all peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel deployed by the United Nations in the context of missions, as mandated by the Council, to help them better prevent, recognize and respond to sexual violence and other forms of violence against civilians.

This and the empowerment of women and girls are essential measures of prevention, which is, in my delegation's view, always more effective and less costly than cure.