

HUMAN SECURITY NETWORK
INTERVENTION ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE
AUGUST 2009

Mr. President,

It is an honor for Costa Rica to speak today in its capacity as Chair of the Human Security Network and on behalf of the following members: Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Switzerland, Thailand, Slovenia and South Africa as an observer.

Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate and I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his presentation. We welcome the submission of his report on sexual violence and the valuable recommendations contained therein.

Mr. President,

In the last ten years, the Security Council has increasingly considered security issues with a gender perspective and has materialized its commitment through resolutions 1325 and 1820. These resolutions place women at the core of the consideration of security issues, recognizing them as victims as well as instrumental in achieving peace and fostering development in societies affected by armed conflict. Furthermore, resolutions 1612 and the recently adopted ____, both on children and armed conflict, and resolution 1674 on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, strengthen and expand the protection framework of the Security Council with respect to sexual violence.

Mr. President,

We commend the thematic progress in the Council and welcome positive developments in several specific situations. However, the progress towards implementation of cross-cutting gender issues has been slow and uneven. This is the result of factors such as a weak coordination within the UN System and the fragmentation of its response, insufficient funding and human resources, the absence of accountability mechanisms and the lack of strong political will. We also welcome the report which highlights the challenges posed by the inadequacy of measures to prevent its occurrence; the failure to end impunity, the persistent discrimination against women and girls in law and practice, as well as the insufficient and inadequate access to assistance and remedy by victims of sexual violence.

Mr. President,

We believe that a more comprehensive and strategic intervention is needed in six critical areas: prevention, protection, women's participation, accountability, assistance to victims and data collection.

The first area is **Prevention**, which is essential to fighting sexual violence and must be tailored to each case's specific circumstances. Gender-based violence, discrimination and inequality contribute to exacerbating sexual violence during the breakdown of the rule of law. Preventive measures must focus on avoiding the marginalization and stigmatization of victims, as well as, facilitating a victim's social reintegration. Efforts must be made to eliminate prejudices, discriminatory social patterns, historically rooted inequalities, and harmful traditional and cultural practices. In addition, these measures should try to raise community awareness, and a more direct engagement of traditional and religious leaders, especially men.

The second area of focus is the need to strengthen the **Protection** capacity of States against sexual violence. Security sector reform and the rule of law can play a vital role in this process. International cooperation should increase resources to improve policing and civilian services, and provide technical assistance and mentoring for training military and police forces to deal with cases of sexual violence. This can result in an increased awareness of human rights standards and obligations under international law. In dealing with peacekeeping operations and protection mandates, clear gender and operational guidelines need to be developed for peacekeepers in order to effectively tackle systematic or widespread sexual violence. Furthermore, it is fundamental that enhanced coordination, integrated strategic frameworks and joint priorities of the different UN actors on the ground, bring together a more effective response to this problem. We believe that integrated peacekeeping operations, with the contribution of the Peacebuilding Commission, can result in a more strategic intervention.

The third area under consideration, deals with **Participation**. Despite the adoption of resolution 1325 nine years ago, the **participation** of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding remains minimal. As reiterated in resolution 1820, we must strive to ensure the systematic participation of women in peacekeeping and political missions, in addition to increasing the number of female head of missions, military observers and civilian police, and UN employed female mediators.

The fourth area of interest is **Accountability**, which through justice, fosters the promotion and sustainability of peace. In this regard, we consider that amnesties should exclude crimes of sexual violence. All parties, State and non-State, must always refrain from committing sexual violence. In addition, all necessary steps should be taken to protect individuals, punish perpetrators and provide remedy to victims. Zero tolerance policies and the principle of superior responsibility for its implementation are also important measures to enforce **accountability**. In this context, a real commitment of civilian and military leaders is important to reduce sexual violence. International cooperation must assist efforts to hold perpetrators accountable and to ensure equal and effective access to justice under internationally accepted standards. The complementary role of international justice mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court and others, can also play a relevant role in supporting national efforts to fight impunity.

The Security Council, should always consider the inclusion of gender concerns, as well as provisions to prevent and respond to sexual violence, when establishing or renewing peacekeeping mandates. Targeted sanctions, and other means to ensure compliance, should be considered. In addition, the Security Council should improve the communication and exchange of information among its subsidiary bodies in order to ensure a more coherent approach to sexual violence.

The fifth area that deserves our attention is **Assistance to Victims**. In addition to the previously mentioned measures, there must be a multi-sectoral approach for the provision of **assistance** and social protection to victims, in particular to ensure their access to medical care, psychological support, legal assistance, education and socio-economic reintegration. Initiatives, such as UN Action, should be complemented with efforts to address the root causes of violence.

Lastly, **Data Collection** is an area that needs to be addressed in order to move forward in the implementation of resolutions 1325 and 1820. We need to improve the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting systems that facilitate the strategic planning and assessment of progress. These systems help to protect the lives of victims and to prevent their revictimization. We support the Secretary-General's request for annual reports and the inclusion of a data collection mechanism in his next report.

Mr. President,

I would like to finish my statement by making also a few remarks in my national capacity on two issues that we consider fundamental for a more effective action by the United Nations in assisting States to fight sexual violence.

1. **UN gender architecture**
2. **Commission of inquiry for Chad, DRC and Sudan**