

**Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative of India to the UN at the UN Security Council Open Debate on “Sexual Violence in Conflict” under Agenda Item on “Women and Peace and Security” in New York on June 24, 2013**

Thank you, Mr. President.

At the outset, I would like to thank you for organizing this important open debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict in the broader context of the discourse on Women, Peace and Security.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Ms Zainab Hawa Bangura, SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and civil society representative Ms. Jane Adong Agywar from NGO Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice, for their remarks.

Mr. President,

The resolution of conflict situations requires the adoption of a sustainable, holistic approach to conflict resolution and the overall reconstruction of impacted societies. In our view, gender equality and women’s empowerment are integral to the pursuit of this objective. The participation of women in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction efforts are imperative to lay the foundation for durable peace. Economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy cannot be achieved without the active engagement of women.

Thirteen years ago, UNSCR 1325 highlighted the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and children and the need for effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation of women in peace processes. That resolution also contained several detailed recommendations on how to deal with various aspects of this issue.

As reports made to the Security Council since UNSCR 1325 was passed show, we have not made enough progress on implementing its recommendations. Take, for example, the peacekeeping operations mandated by the United Nations Security Council. As one of the major contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations for over six decades, Indian peacekeepers serving under the Blue Flag have also had to deal with this pernicious problem under challenging circumstances. We are of the view, based on our experience on the ground, that the Security Council must make available the resources that are required to implement the expanded scope of peacekeeping mandates. Specifically, we require greater commitment to the deployment of women’s protection advisers in peacekeeping operations.

Mr. President,

The Security Council had called in UNSCR 1325 for greater participation of women in the field-based operations of the United Nations in terms of deployment of police personnel. We are proud of the fact that India was the first member state of the United Nations to successfully deploy an all-women police force as part of the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Liberia, where sexual violence had been one of the hallmarks of the conflict. Apart from the effectiveness of this force, which has been acknowledged by many, we believe that the functioning of such an all-women force has also sent a strong deterrent message to those who indulge in the egregious crime of sexual violence in conflict. By deploying women to deal with conflict situations, we have demonstrated that we can push forward the goal of empowering women to deal with the crime of sexual violence in armed conflicts, and play a major role in post-conflict reconstruction of traumatized societies. We hope that this example will encourage others to follow suit.

Mr. President,

India has drawn the attention of the Security Council in earlier debates to the impact of so-called militia groups on the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. As the reports made to the Council since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 show, this impact has been felt especially in crimes of sexual violence in conflict situations where peacekeeping mandates are in force.

It is in this context that we take the view that national governments have the primary responsibility for prosecuting and deterring such crimes in conflict situations on their territories, even if these are alleged to have been committed by so-called militia groups. We believe that national governments should be assisted by the United Nations in augmenting their capacities to deal with this issue. This would play a vital role for ensuring better governance, and the stabilization of post-conflict situations. The UN should focus its efforts in this area.

Mr. President,

We would like to reiterate our principled position that debates such as this in the Security Council should focus on issues related to the mandate specifically given by the Council. We would urge caution in going beyond such mandates in reports submitted to the Council, which can only serve to dilute the focus of the Council and which contain the potential to divert much-needed resources away from the task at hand. It is critical therefore that such reports remain focused on the situations of armed conflict that are on the agenda of the Council, and not stray into so-called "situations of concern" on the basis of sweeping generalizations.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to once again reaffirm India's commitment to positively contribute to our collective efforts to tackle the crime of sexual violence

in situations of armed conflict, in the overall framework of the work of the United Nations on the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and peace building.

I thank you.

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