



SLOVENIA

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**Statement by Ambassador Darja Bavdaž Kuret,
Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations
at the Security Council Open Debate on
on "Sexual Violence in Conflict"
in connection with the agenda item on "Women and Peace and Security"
New York, 16 April 2018**

Mr. President,

I would like to thank Peru for organizing this important debate and the speakers for their briefings. Slovenia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the EU and by the Human Security Network and would like to make some additional remarks in our national capacity.

Slovenia welcomes the report submitted by the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and shares a deep concern regarding the findings. We join others in condemning grave violations committed against women and girls, men and boys in conflict situations.

As the report once again demonstrates sexual violence in contemporary conflicts is not a side effect, but rather a front-line consideration and a horrifying tactic of war. As such, rape and other forms of sexual violence may amount to war crimes and crime against humanity. All perpetrators should be held accountable. It is of utmost importance to prevent the trend of continuous sexual violence by fighting impunity. In this regard, the role of international criminal justice has been recognized, in particular the International Criminal Court, with historic judgments in Bemba case and Ntaganda case, confirming that rape and sexual slavery of children by members the same armed group can be charged as war crimes under the Rome Statute.

At the same time, we recall that the primary responsibility to protect civilians and to bring perpetrators to justice resides with States. Therefore states must be in the fore front in preventing and ending conflict-related sexual violence. The international community must assist states in addressing all these issues, such as the investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators, including UN and other peacekeeping personnel.

Although the victims of sexual violence are predominantly women and girls, we should not forget that sexual violence is also committed against boys and men, particularly in detention. Much has already been done when it comes to victims'

assistance, but as long we are faced with tragic stories we must not stop in doing everything humanly possible to alleviate their suffering. Many victims, especially women, lose their health, livelihoods, families and support networks as a result of rape. Stigma is still placed on the victims rather than on the perpetrators. This in turn can shatter the structures that anchor community values and that disrupt their transmission to future generations. This vicious circle must thus stop.

Mr President,

Conflict-related sexual violence is not only humanitarian or human rights issue, but a security issue as well. It impedes especially women to participate in peace and political processes and in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. As a tool of war it can become a way of life: once entrenched in the fabric of society, it lingers long after peace had been formally agreed.

Prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence are important elements in the efforts to empower women and achieve gender equality. Sexual and gender-based violence present a barrier to women's participation not only in peace-related and post-conflict activities but also in every-day life.

Slovenia is addressing the correlation of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in two draft strategic documents, to be adopted in 2018. The new Action Plan on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security for the period 2018-2020 addresses this issue as one of 5 areas to which Slovenia activities are devoted. It addresses conflict-related sexual violence also in activities within areas devoted to accountability, education and training.

Violence against women, including sexual violence, together with other 3 areas dedicated to empowerment of women will also be a part of the Guidelines on gender equality in development cooperation as annex to the Strategy on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of Slovenia, aimed to implement the new Resolution on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Republic of Slovenia, which was adopted by the National Assembly in September 2017.

On the national level important achievements have also been reached in the education and training on women, peace and security, which were systematically introduced throughout the Slovene Armed Forces. In 2015 a permanent position of gender adviser in the General Staff of the Slovene Armed Forces was established as well as a network of gender advisers.

Mr President,

We are proud that these efforts have shown concrete results and have also been recognized internationally by ranking Slovenia 4th on the Women, peace and Security Index.

This is however no time to rest. We will continue to support UN action against conflict related sexual violence and have thus joined the Secretary General's Voluntary Compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse as part of the overall Zero Tolerance policy which Slovenia strongly supports.

I thank you.