

Statement by  
H.E. Mr. David Donoghue  
Permanent Representative

at the

UN Security Council open debate:  
Women, Peace and Security – Sexual Violence in Conflict

New York, 25 April 2014

*Check against delivery*

Madame President,

Ireland aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a particularly heinous and barbaric crime. It is undoubtedly under-reported – yet even so, the recent report of the Secretary-General presents an extensive catalogue of crimes ongoing in 20 different country situations. In conflict and in post-conflict settings. With the victims - women and girls; men and boys – invariably from among the most vulnerable in their societies.

Since last year's annual open debate, we have seen further significant normative progress. Resolution 2106 last June addressed impunity and effective justice. Resolution 2122 of last October calls for more consistent implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, with special attention to enhancing women's participation and leadership. 144 countries endorsed last September's Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict; the UK will continue its leadership on this issue with a global summit which it is convening in June. Rightly, the Secretary-General concludes that, "*at the global level, there is now unprecedented commitment and momentum*" to address decisively the scourge of sexual violence in conflict.

And yet the critical question remains: how can we translate this normative progress into more widespread change on the ground?

Madame President,

The primary route towards ending sexual violence in conflict is for governments to take **national ownership of this issue, national responsibility and national action**. The UN and the international community make an important contribution, but transformative change only happens when national political leaders adopt this agenda as their own.

The Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, understands this better than anyone, having added national ownership as a sixth priority of her mission when she assumed her post. The Office of the Special Representative engages in practical conversations with relevant parties, making clearer and more consistent requests of national authorities - and in return offering ready support and capacity building. We hope that through this dialogue the reported cases of modest gains can now be scaled up.

The UN generally seeks to be as practical and operational as possible in its approach and we welcome this. For example, there is an increasing focus on training national security sector actors in confronting sexual violence in conflict. There is certainly room to improve the protection afforded women and girls from violence in humanitarian emergencies. **Irish Aid**, the Irish government's development cooperation programme, seeks to ensure that the protection of women and girls in emergencies is one of the key criteria in its decisions on humanitarian funding. And over the coming three years we will progressively increase the funding we provide for protection in emergency and recovery contexts.

Along with the international community, **civil society actors** in the countries concerned play a crucial role. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Mary Robinson, is reaching out to women's groups and civil society in that region. She is building a sustainable constituency that will continue to seek change, that will insist on the importance of ensuring political participation by women and that will continue to hold governments accountable for the commitments they have made.

Ireland was happy to be associated yesterday with an event on Burma / Myanmar, which was organised by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security and which looked at issues around sexual violence in conflict. The Special Representative and a representative of Burmese civil society, Ms Naw K'nyaw Paw participated in the event. A crucial part of Myanmar's transition to democracy will be to address current and historical human rights abuses, which include crimes of sexual violence. The Secretary-General's recent report has called for a comprehensive protection and service response for survivors of sexual violence and we wholeheartedly support this.

Madame President,

We must all strive to be as innovative as we can in terms of incentivising national leaders to adopt the women, peace and security agenda as their own. We must be more ambitious in addressing the root causes of sexual violence in conflict – women's second-class status and a culture of impunity. And we must seek to promote women's political and economic empowerment as crucial to the long-term prevention of sexual violence.

Only national political ownership in the countries concerned can lead to decisive action to end this scourge. We – the UN family, donors and member states, civil society – must do all that we can to encourage such ownership.

Thank you.