

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and  
Security: Sexual Violence in Conflict**

**Statement by H.E. Mr. David Donoghue**

**Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United  
Nations**

**Security Council Chamber**

**New York, 15 May 2017**

**[Check against delivery]**

Mister/Madam President,

We thank Uruguay for convening today's debate, and align ourselves with the statements delivered by the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

I also pay tribute to the outgoing Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura. I wish our new SRSG, Ms. Pramila Patten, success as she takes up this important role.

The recent report of the Secretary-General highlighted the various challenges we face in addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Allow me, in my national capacity, to emphasise three areas we feel are in need of particular attention today:

**First, the link between sexual violence and trafficking.**

Sexual violence and trafficking are issues that all countries must deal with. This is why Ireland's Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking mainstreams the issue of sexual violence. However in times of war, relevant prevention and protection mechanisms are almost completely eroded, allowing the activities of terrorist groups and criminal networks to thrive. UN Security Council Resolution 2331 is our strongest legal instrument yet to highlight the relationship between sexual violence and trafficking in situations of conflict. We look forward to enhanced efforts by the UN and its Member States to implement this innovative resolution in complementarity with the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Moreover, as UN Member States look towards adopting two global compacts in 2018, we hope that the vulnerability of migrants and refugees to both trafficking and sexual violence - as well as the need for women's participation in finding solutions - is strongly reflected.

**Second, the need to place victims' needs and perspectives at the core of our work.**

We still do not know the true number of victims of sexual violence in conflict. Moreover, we still do not fully understand their specific needs and perspectives - though we are getting better at this. We have heard how victims of conflict-related sexual violence can be re-victimised even after their ordeal has ended: Women interrogated as potential affiliates of extremist groups, instead of receiving treatment and support as victims of terrorism. Children facing legal and social discrimination having been born from rape. Boys and men finding themselves excluded from victim support and redress.

We commend the work of the outgoing SRSG and her team for giving a voice to these victims. We hope to see an increase in invitations to the SRSG to brief relevant sanctions committees, as well as to civil society and victims' representatives to deliver briefings in the Security Council chamber. As a troop contributing country, we support further efforts to integrate the perspectives of civil society and local communities into the UN's peace operations.

**Third, the emphasis placed on prevention.**

We welcome the focus placed by the Secretary General's report on the link between accountability and prevention. Ireland calls for the UN and, in particular, its Member States to support sensitised and expert means to pursue accountability for sexual violence in conflict, for example the work undertaken by Justice Rapid Response and the Team of Experts. Moreover, if peacekeepers deployed by the UN fail to prevent sexual violence, as we have seen in South Sudan, or in fact serve as the *perpetrators* of such a crime, as, shockingly, we have seen, they must be held accountable. Troop contributing countries as well as the UN itself have clear responsibilities in this regard.

Moreover, we must pursue prevention by understanding and tackling the conditions in which sexual violence can occur. The report demonstrates the link between a lack of women's economic empowerment and vulnerability to sexual violence. Similarly, sexual violence is widely recognised as both a result and early warning sign of conflict.

Mr / Madam President,

- If we implement the 2030 Agenda, including Goals 5 and 16;
  - If we make smart, sustained investments to prevent conflict and violent extremism;
  - If we help to build resilient institutions;
  - If we integrate the Women, Peace and Security agenda into all of our work on the ground;
  - If we reorient our peace and security architecture to foster Sustaining Peace;
- All of this will contribute to preventing future cases of sexual violence in conflict.

Sexual violence in conflict is not a new phenomenon. It has unfortunately been a recurring feature of our collective history. There have been developments unique to our time, such as the horrific use of sexual violence as part of the recruitment and financing strategies of terrorist groups. However, the international community has never been better informed, nor has it been better equipped with legal and practical tools to tackle this scourge. The implementation of the report's recommendations would serve as a significant step towards making sexual violence a thing of the past.