

Statement by

H.E Mr. David Donoghue
Permanent Representative

at the

UN Security Council Open Debate on Conflict-Related Sexual
Violence:
*Responding to human trafficking in situations of conflict-related
sexual violence*

New York, Thursday 2 June 2016

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Mr. President,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this very timely debate and would like to thank you for convening it.

I also align myself with the statement made by the European Union and offer the following remarks in a national capacity.

Mr. President,

Eight years after the adoption of UNSCR 1820, which recognised conflict-related sexual violence as a war crime and a crime against humanity, we continue to find ourselves in a deeply troubling situation.

The use of sexual violence as a tool of war and terror continues unabated in many conflicts, and an increase in human trafficking, including the trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation, has emerged as an alarming trend.

Last December, this Council heard harrowing accounts of how ISIL / Da'esh, the Lord's Resistance Army, and Boko Haram, among others, are deliberately employing tactics of human trafficking and sexual abuse in conflict contexts. And today we heard distressing evidence from SRSG Bangura underlining the scale and gravity of the issue.

This is despite the availability of a range of instruments which can address this problem.

Chief amongst these is the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

UN Security Council resolutions 2242 and 1325, along with other important documents such as the Council's December 2015 Presidential Statement on Human Trafficking, have established a strong normative framework and provide a basis on which to tackle the context in which trafficking takes place.

Mr. President,

Norms are little use without action. We must focus on action.

Taking an optimistic view, we are beginning to see some positive results on the ground. For example, Colombia not only ensured the active participation of women around the peace table but is also taking steps to secure the participation of women in the political, social and security dimensions of its impending peace agreement.

Just two months ago, we heard in New York from civil society representatives from Kenya and Indonesia, who related their experiences of the role of women in preventing violent extremism.

And, as we speak, Ireland is hosting in Dublin the first workshop of gender advisors from UN and regional organisations engaged in peacekeeping operations. The purpose is to enable them to share lessons from the field and to consider next steps for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on a regionally coherent basis.

However, for every positive example, we have many more examples of the worst forms of sexual violence going unchecked, unaccounted for and unpunished. We need more action and we need more justice, especially when it comes to human trafficking.

Mr. President,

We've seen from discussions in this Chamber that cases of human trafficking in the context of conflict-related sexual violence proliferate in the absence of the rule of law.

The buying and selling of human beings - of women and young girls - cannot be treated just as any other crime. It is one that sees the victim continue to be victimised long after the initial offence is committed. Too often we have seen that women who have been rescued from trafficking continue to be devalued, stigmatised and ostracised by their own communities.

There are no easy answers here but simple justice must prevail. There is no excuse for not investigating and prosecuting cases of trafficking. If an individual state cannot or will not do so, then we must ensure that the international community is in a position to pursue justice through all available means, including international criminal law, sanctions, and cross-border legal and law enforcement cooperation.

However, a drive to meet the psychological and physical needs of victims – who are mostly women and girls – must play a central role in any such actions. If victims cannot meet their basic needs of shelter, food and protection, the pursuit of justice and accountability rings hollow and cannot succeed.

Mr. President,

In September, all of us will participate in the High level Meeting of the General Assembly on large movements of refugees and migrants. This offers member states an opportunity to declare how they are responding and how they will respond to the scourge of human trafficking that so often takes place under the cover of such large-scale movements.

In preparing that meeting, as co-facilitator Ireland will do whatever it can to ensure that questions of justice and protection for the victims of human trafficking are fully addressed, including in the outcome document from the meeting.

Finally, Mr. President, we can see that the scourge of trafficking cannot be eliminated unless we step up broader efforts on conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

Ireland sees the three major reviews from last year as an avenue through which the UN can be brought closer to fulfilling its mandate. The very reason we sit in this chamber is to seek to end wars, to prevent their recurrence and to mitigate their consequences. And, even if we fall short in these respects, it is vital that we do everything we can to protect the most vulnerable people caught in the midst of conflict.

Thank you, Mr. President.