

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,
ON THE DEBATE ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT, AT THE UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL ON DECEMBER 17, 2010

Madam President,

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

There is a saying that all that is necessary for evil to continue is for good men to do nothing.

My delegation believes that the community of nations must ensure that the human rights of all are respected. Universal respect for human rights is, in our view, the basis of the common and better future that we seek to build.

The weakest, Madam President, are the biggest victims of conflict and as the Secretary General points out in his report, women continue to suffer appallingly in conflicts around the world.

Sexual violence is, according to the report, not merely a consequence of conflict but a driver. It perpetuates conflict and locks its victims into a vicious cycle of violence and oppression.

The international community has not just the responsibility, but the obligation to do its utmost to ensure the security of women and children, to ensure that they are not handicapped in any respect and that every possible effort is made to create conditions where they can realize their potential.

Madam President,

Two important strands of international concern converge in this debate. These are the struggle to empower women and the constant endeavor of the United Nations to preserve peace and international security.

The struggle to empower women has moved from declaratory resolutions to a more comprehensive approach. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Commission on Status of Women have been milestones in this journey.

I was myself pro-actively involved in the final stages of the critical negotiations that led to the creation of UN WOMEN. We have, indeed, very high expectations from this entity as women's empowerment and gender equality are among our key national development priorities.

No country can be absolved from the responsibility of acting against sexual violence, one of the more abhorrent forms of violence against women. My delegation is therefore committed to the creation and augmentation of international regimes that furthers these objectives.

The proceedings of the Council today will build upon and add to the edifice that has been created by UNSC Resolutions 1325, 1612, 1820, 1882 and 1888. These resolutions and other associated decisions of the UN Security Council on *inter alia* Sexual Violence, Children and Protection of Civilians have led to a significant accretion in the corpus of international law.

We also welcome the appointment of Ms. Margot Wallstrom as SRSG for Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Madam President,

The resolve of the international community in the area of Sexual Violence in Conflict has also oriented the operational and peacekeeping activities of the United Nations towards recognizing the plight of women and children in conflict areas and to be proactive in working towards preventing violence against them.

India supports these developments. These are, however, first steps towards ensuring that no woman lives in fear, even if we cannot ensure that she is free from want.

The Resolution that is being adopted today, and which we have co-sponsored, will add a number of new dimensions to the ongoing work in this area.

The provenance of the concepts that have been introduced in the resolution today is the structure that has been created in respect of Children in Armed Conflict.

While the objectives of this framework are laudable, its implementation remains and will remain work in progress for some time. As a delegation that will join the Security Council in January 2011 we will remain seriously engaged with both the evolution of the normative side and its implementation.

The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, in particular, which is to provide the data on the basis of which this system is to operate needs close supervision by the Member States to also ensure its veracity and credibility.

The process of data collection and analysis and that of listing and de-listing should also be carried out in a transparent and judicious manner under the close supervision of Member States.

Madam President,

It is not enough for the Security Council to mandate. It must make available the resources that are required to implement the ambitious legislative framework that it has created. UN peacekeeping missions and peacekeepers in the ground are being asked to do more and more with less and less.

The resolution that is being adopted today is a case in point. While the decision of the Council will expand the scope of peacekeeping mandates, no cognizance is taken of the fact that resources to implement the existing mandates are already inadequate.

Accountability must be established for those who mandate but do not provide resources.

Being the largest troop contributing country in UN history, with more than 100,000 peacekeepers in 40 UN missions, India has perhaps more experience than most in implementing Security Council mandates. It is, indeed, Indian troops along with the peacekeepers of fellow TCCs, who convert the intent of this Council into deed.

We take great pride in the stellar record of our peacekeepers, both men and women, in the protection of women, children and the weak.

The Council has been briefed that Indian troops have apprehended some of the principal culprits behind the recent sexual violence in MONUSCO. We can do much more if more troops are deployed, if more resources, capacities and enablers are made available. It is a matter of concern that the Council is unable to address these deficits.

Martin Luther King once said that "Injustice anywhere diminishes justice everywhere." My delegation believes that the perpetrators of these crimes must be brought to justice. We believe that the national capacities to adjudicate and to punish must be strengthened and supported to ensure that justice is done and the guilty punished.

Madam President,

My delegation is of the view that the UN Secretariat and the Funds and Programmes can do more. We have consistently held the view that greater participation of women in the areas of conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peace keeping and post conflict reconstruction is an essential pre-requisite for lasting peace and security.

Today's resolution identifies Women Protection Advisors as key components of the implementation strategy. We support this concept. We believe that Advisors need to have direct and relevant experience and would be happy to contribute personnel who have what would be required to be effective.

I would also like, at this point, to state that we value the contributions of Civil Society in this arena. We look forward to working with them in taking this common agenda forward.

Madam President,

I belong to the Sikh faith. Four centuries ago, Guru Gobind Singh, at a time when conditions in India were unstable and conflict-ridden, ordered us to treat women captured in battle with the greatest respect. This is the Indian ethos in respect of women, particularly during situations of conflict. This is what we are committed to and this is what we will uphold.

Thank You.

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