

United Nations Security Council
“High Level Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict”

INDIA STATEMENT
by
Ms. Paulomi Tripathi, First Secretary

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Mr. President,

1. My delegation would like to thank you for organizing this open debate. We thank all the briefers for sharing their experiences and insights.

2. Let me begin by strongly condemning the serial blasts in Sri Lanka and extending our deepest condolences to the families of the victims, to the people and Government of Sri Lanka.

Mr. President,

3. Despite commendable advances both in policy and practice in combating sexual violence, the gap between what is recommended and the reality in the field remains. We need to better understand the dynamic complexities, that manifests as sexual violence in armed conflict, in order to prevent the atrocities, to end the culture of impunity and to rehabilitate and reintegrate the survivors.

Mr. President,

4. Our experience of the appalling atrocities perpetrated against women with impunity by the armed forces of a State, in our immediate neighborhood in 1971, remains vivid. The scars of these wounds are yet to heal.

5. The call for justice that has reverberated at the high level general debate annually by a strong woman leader who remains steadfast in reminding the international community of the sexual violence committed against women of her country.

6. The perpetrators of these crimes are now masquerading as champions of justice in order to cover their misdeeds.

Mr. President,

7. We would make following five points on the theme of today's discussion.

8. **First, a robust framework for accountability** against sexual violence in armed conflicts must seek to **include all actors, irrespective of their affiliations and motivations.**

9. The conceptualization of sexual violence primarily as a 'tactic of war' has become pervasive. It is based on historical evidence and we are not disputing the assertion.

10. Yet, restricting our understanding to the notion of instrumentality of sexual violence in armed conflicts runs the risk of **rendering invisible the 'other' victims** of such atrocities. These invisible victims could include boys and men, or those violated by civilians and humanitarian actors with other motivations. Framework of accountability and reparation must address their sufferings.

11. Second, a fragmented conceptualization of sexual violence in armed conflicts often leads to decoupling of the issue from its socio-cultural, political and economic context. Interventions based on limited considerations typically attempts to **treat the symptoms rather than the underlying ailment**.

12. The understanding of **nexus between terrorism, trafficking and sexual violence** must inform action in this regard. The Council must push for greater cooperation on countering terrorism and effective implementation of the sanctions regimes.

13. Third, UN must prioritize **support to national governments** to adopt stronger legal, administrative and justice systems for protecting the rights of the victims, prosecuting the perpetrators and addressing long-term consequences of abuses on the individual, family and community.

14. Fourth, greater **participation of women in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation** processes needs to be promoted to address deep rooted inequality and subordination in the society.

15. Treating victims, their families and communities, as mere beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance disempowers them. Strengthening role of **locally-led civil society organizations** are therefore pivotal to sustainable solutions.

16. Fifth, mainstreaming of **gender perspective in peace operations** and **increasing women's representation in peacekeeping** are prerequisites for prevention and response.

17. In this regard, India welcomes the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy to increase the number of women peacekeepers, and is ready to deploy a Female Engagement Team in MONUSCO and a women Formed Police Unit in UNMISS this year.

Mr. President,

18. To conclude, improving response to sexual violence in armed conflicts by the Security Council cannot be pursued in isolation. The normative work done outside the Council regarding equal rights and empowerment of women must continue to inform the discussions.

I thank you.