



Bangladesh

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Rabab Fatima, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in New York at the Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 14 April 2021 (virtual)

I thank the Viet Nam Presidency for organizing today's open debate on this important subject. I also express my sincere appreciation to all the briefers for their valuable remarks.

We thank the Secretary General for his comprehensive report which reveals deeply concerning trends of continued use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We are particularly disturbed by the lack of compliance of the Security Council's normative framework, by both the State and non-state parties to the conflicts. We support the Secretary General's call for the Council to enforce compliance by "translating commitments into compliance and resolutions into results".

We appreciate the focus of today's debate, which is "provision of assistance and access to services for the victims of sexual violence including their needs for rehabilitation, justice and reintegration". It is evidently clear that scars of sexual violence continue to destroy lives, whereas justice and redress to the victims remain elusive. Urgent reinforcement is needed to the victim-centric response to sexual violence in conflict.

Bangladesh itself went through the painful experience of sexual violence in conflict during its war of liberation in 1971. Over 2,00,000 women bore its brunt.

Despite numerous challenges in rebuilding a war-ravaged country, we prioritized on the needs of the victims, and in 1972, right after independence, a 'Rehabilitation Board for Relief and Reconstruction of War Affected Women' was established. The Board collected information about the women and children abused during the war and arranged for their rehabilitation. This National Board also addressed the physical condition of many women by offering safe delivery of unwanted pregnancies that resulted from rape. The victims were also offered with choices in respect of their reproductive health through emergency medical procedures.

It didn't end there. The perpetrators of the sexual violence have been brought to justice through a trial process. The contribution of victims has also been recognized officially.

Our commitment to this issue has also been reflected in our National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Taking into account Bangladesh's contribution in UN peace operations, the Action Plan has included specific provisions to increase the number of women peacekeepers and also to strengthen knowledge and compliance of obligations related to sexual violence in conflict. The Action Plan recommends specific activity for updating and localizing modules and training materials for the peacekeepers for implementation of related mandates.

Our government has also been providing critical support to the victims of sexual violence in Myanmar, as we are hosting now over a million forcibly displaced Rohingyas in Cox's Bazaar, a large majority of whom are women and children. The National Action Plan recognizes the need for capacity building of local humanitarian actors on gender responsive and victim-centric humanitarian actions. The humanitarian assistance programmes for the Rohingya people takes into account specific protection needs of the victims of sexual violence.

In order for the Council to implement its relevant resolutions, particularly resolution 2467, we would like to suggest the following actions:

First: The compliance framework suggested by the Council resolutions need to be fully implemented, especially by regular monitoring at the field level and engagement by the Office of the Special Representative through UN country teams. We see merit in the recommendations to strengthen targeted measures against those who do not implement existing obligations, and commit, command or condone sexual violence in conflict. Coherence between sexual violence in conflict and targeted measures would indeed send a clear signal underlining the gravity of these violations.

Second: Increased sensitivity towards the needs of victims including their physical, psychological and livelihood needs are critically important. Equally important is to build the capacity of the State to cater to those needs. In this regard, relevant national institutions and stakeholders need to be empowered and supported so that the victims could be provided with rehabilitation and reintegration services. Mandated UN entities should be adequately resourced to support such measures.

Third: Accountability and justice systems need to be strengthened to address more effectively sexual violence, especially in the conflict and post conflict contexts, as

unaccounted for cases “normalizes” the crime and builds a culture of impunity. The legal framework and justice mechanisms in national context need to be strengthened. The Security Council needs to use its mandate and authority when national justice mechanism is unable to deliver.

Fourth: We believe the issue of sexual violence cannot be addressed sustainably if the root causes are not addressed. Discrimination, persecution and subjugation weaken the vulnerable and marginalized community and reduce their ability to prevent incidents of sexual violence in the hands of the parties in conflicts. For that to change, implementation of WPS agenda needs to be high on UN’s support in specific country setting. Only 89 member states have so far developed National Action Plans under resolution 1325. One practical method could be to pursue universalizing the National Action Plans more vigorously. NAP could serve as an important yardstick to measure progress.

Finally: Other UN mechanisms should complement Council’s work for implementation of WPS agenda. The SVC commitments need to be internalized by the entire UNsystem, including at the ground level by the Resident Coordinators and other UN agencies in the country teams. This would address the capacity gaps at the security sector, justicesystem and in the overall political process for increasing women’s participation at all levels of the peace process. Also greater synergies are needed between the mandated UN entities and the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) towards ensuring compliance of the General Recommendation 30 of CEDAW, which obliges its 189 States parties to report on SVC related resolutions.

I thank you.

—