



Government Offices of Sweden

Statement from Ministry of Culture, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# Swedish statement at the UNSC Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security

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National statement delivered by Her Excellency Ms. Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy, on behalf of Sweden at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security: Preventing sexual violence in conflict through empowerment, gender equality and access to justice, 16 April 2018, New York.

Thank you, Mr President,

I align myself with the statements to be delivered on behalf of the European Union, the Nordic countries and the Group of Friends on Women, Peace and Security.

Mr President,

Let me begin by thanking Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Pramila Patten, for their thoughtful interventions this morning, and for their leadership and concrete efforts to combat conflict related sexual violence. I want to extend a particular word of welcome and thanks to Razia Sultana. Your testimony underlines the critical importance of using all tools available to this Council to prevent and respond to conflict related sexual violence.

In my position as the Swedish Minister for Culture and Democracy – with responsibilities such as national human rights, civil society and the fight

against discrimination and racism – I have met women and girls, men and boys seeking asylum in Sweden, and listened to their testimonies. Stories about children in conflict areas, taken from their families, abducted, forced into sexual slavery – horrible atrocities.

But it doesn't stop there. During their journey to Europe, they were once again abused and harassed, including in refugee camps.

My role as Minister is to listen, to understand and – most importantly – to act. These testimonies, like Ms. Sultanas, cannot only be something we here are horrified by. The stories must become the starting point for action.

Regrettably, violence, oppression and systematic subordination still mark the daily lives of countless women and girls. Conflict related sexual violence brutalises and traumatises the victims and seeks to undermine and shatter communities and societies. Its impact cannot be overestimated. Addressing this scourge is a central part of the Security Council's work. Alarming, conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism has reached new levels. This is a core security challenge.

At the heart of this issue is the fundamental principle of women's full enjoyment of human rights, especially sexual and reproductive health and rights. The link between accountability and prevention is clear. Ensuring accountability and putting an end to impunity for violations and abuses against international law must be a priority for all of us, both inside and outside this Council.

When Sweden joined the Security Council, we set out two overarching priorities: Conflict Prevention and Women, Peace and Security. Therefore, we thank Peru for organizing this open debate, and welcome the focus in today's discussion.

Mr President,

Since 2014, Sweden has pursued a feminist foreign policy based on the "four R's" – rights, representation, resources and 'reality check'. This means that throughout our foreign policy – including peace, security, trade, humanitarian and development efforts – we are applying a systematic gender perspective. Without the inclusion of and respect for all, a sustainable peace can never be achieved. We know that gender equality makes societies more peaceful. The ongoing Stockholm Forum on Gender Equality will cover many of these critical issues and seek common solutions.

The Council needs to address the gender dynamics of the root causes of conflict. We must consider structural gender inequality as a critical element of the instability that hinders efforts to maintain or restore international peace and security. To achieve this, we need gendered conflict analysis, building on gender-disaggregated data and solid gender expertise. We also need to build alliances with brave civil society actors, who play an essential role in addressing conflict-related sexual violence and promoting gender equality. We fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Council considers the early warning signs of sexual violence in its monitoring of conflict situations.

Last year, the Security Council added the first ever separate designation criteria on conflict related sexual violence in the sanctions regime for the Central African Republic. However, having the criteria is not enough, sanctions committees also need gender expertise. This year, when the Council renewed the sanctions regime for the Central African Republic, it added language to respond to this need. Let's work together to include similar criteria in all relevant sanctions regimes.

Panels of Experts must also be mandated to report to the sanctions committees on conflict-related sexual violence, and in cases where there are still no separate designation criteria, we encourage the panels to report under the International Humanitarian Law and, or, human rights criteria.

To further inform country-specific considerations, we encourage Council Members, and the broader membership, to make full use of the documents and the meetings of the Security Council Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Mr President,

The importance of women in peacekeeping no longer needs to be justified. The evidence speaks for itself. With more female peacekeepers and police officers we can achieve more, and reach the whole population in a conflict area. Sweden is actively addressing factors that hinder the deployment of women peacekeepers, police, and corrections officers.

Women, peace and security is an integral part of pre-deployment training for all Swedish troops, and all deployed contingents have specially trained gender advisers. There are many good examples to be shared in this regard.

We welcome the enhanced focus on access to justice and its links to

prevention. This contributes to ending impunity as well as to ensuring victims' trust in accountable and effective criminal justice institutions.

As the Secretary-General's report highlights, the effects of sexual violence – including trauma, stigma, poverty, and poor health – can echo across generations. In response, we need to ensure socio-economic reintegration support to restore community cohesion. Survivors of sexual and gender based violence also must have access to the full range of livelihood, legal, psychosocial and medical services, including sexual and reproductive health services that are not subject to donor restrictions.

Mr President,

The focus of today's open debate shows that it is a broad agenda with many interconnected goals, and that no single actor can achieve them alone. This makes alliances so important, between states, regional and international organisations, civil society, women's organisations and others. We, the Security Council, need to show leadership. Not only today, but across all aspects of our work.

Thank you.