

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict- Affected Situations, October 18th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mrs. Perceval, Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations I want to thank the Secretary-General and everyone who, based on their experience and commitment, has contributed to the need to make progress in realizing the full equality for women.

In that connection, I should like to recall what Patrick Cammaert, former Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said in 2008: it is more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in a modern conflict.

Argentina would like to emphasize the need for a gender perspective and for crimes against women to be incorporated into the agenda of peace negotiations. To that end, we need women in decision-making positions and at all stages of the peace process. We know that women are victims of widespread violence at the hands of all parties involved in a conflict. We also know that sexual violence in conflict is not a new phenomenon, rather it is a powerful weapon used to destroy not merely the life of a woman but also to destroy families, communities, ethnic groups or entire nations.

Although we still hear that violence is as old as war itself and that women's bodies have been a battlefield for centuries throughout the world, the experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda served to scuttle the cynical acceptance of sexual violence as a natural phenomenon in armed conflicts, and of rape as a weapon of war of devastating power. The atrocities documented at the time and the survivors' testimonies of massive violations — rapes in camps, mutilations, sexual slavery and forced pregnancies — moved humankind's ethical consciousness, while sexual violence in armed conflicts ceased being an invisible crime or an immutable tradition. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Special Court for Sierra Leone decisively made progress in classifying sexual violence, in particular rape in conflict situations, as torture, a war crime and a crime against humanity. With complete clarity, the International Criminal Court Statute would subsequently establish that acts of rape, sexual slavery, prostitution, forced pregnancy or sterilization or any other form of sexual violence of comparable severity constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In accordance with that progressive increase in awareness, the Security Council's trajectory shows an awareness and increasing commitment to preventing and eradicating sexual and gender-based discrimination in situations of conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as a commitment to ensuring that when sexist crimes are committed, the perpetrators will not enjoy impunity, that there is justice and redress for the victims and that societies can achieve a lasting peace based on authentic reconciliation that is born of an understanding of the truth and a recognition of the fact that nobody has the right to deny another human being of their life, their freedom or their dignity, nor can they impede their participation by way of any type of discrimination in any area of society.

From resolution 1208 (1998), on security for refugees, which underscores the special security needs of women in camps, to resolution 1314 (2000), which underscores the importance of prevention, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policies including a gender perspective, it is clear we have made progress. However, it was particularly through resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions focused on the situation of women in conflict and post-conflict situations that the Council underscored, as priorities in achieving lasting peace, the promotion and protection of women's human rights and their equal participation in transitional justice and reconciliation processes, as well as a human rights perspective and a gender perspective in all the efforts and programmes for development, peace, security and the building and strengthening of the rule of law.

It is true that much remains to be done. Despite all the progress made — as we recently noted in our visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region — weak States, authoritarian Governments, corrupt systems and a widespread culture of impunity serve to perpetuate inequality and violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations, and that enables other types of inequality, discrimination and violence to exist in society. We have worked very hard to put an end to rape as a weapon of war and to the wrongful response of impunity for its perpetrators. While those efforts have contributed to reducing impunity's

negative effects, we are aware that the problem has still not been eradicated.

We cannot lock ourselves inside a laboratory to restore and recognize women's human rights or to build a genuine rule of law. In that connection, I would like to end with the testimony of women from various parts of the world. In this century, in one country in Africa, 1,152 women were raped every day — that is 48 every hour or four every five minutes. In another area of that continent, a woman reported that, when women tried to escape, their children were killed. She said that they raped lots of women and girls and were happy when they raped them. They even sang while they raped them and told them they had the right to do whatever they wish with women. In another country, a women's organization told us that the criminal code there still interprets rape as a form of adultery. If a woman cannot prove that there was no consent and if there are not at least four witnesses who confirm her testimony, women are punished for adultery by whipping or stoning. In a country in Asia, we heard recently from a group of women who were subjected to sexual torture. Their genitals were burned, they said. They were forced into prostitution by security forces, rebel groups and members of peacekeeping missions. In Europe, a woman from the former Yugoslavia testified that in the camps the soldiers raped her all day long. She would fall asleep, but when she awoke a different soldier would be in her bed.

In the Middle East, many women do not turn to the justice system for the crimes they have been subjected to because they say that they are scared — scared of exclusion, of being victimized again, or of being victims of honour crimes. In my region of Latin America and the Caribbean, a woman in a conflict situation said that a woman can never report a rape to her national police; it would be like being raped all over again.

Finally, I would like to share the sentiments expressed in 2012 by a group of women Nobel Peace Prize laureates — Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Mairead Maguire and Leymah Gbowee — that a world without war and violence against women is possible and that

“[o]ur collective efforts have brought gender violence to the forefront of policy and public discussions. Now, our united actions will stop rape in conflict”.

However, we still have much to do to achieve women's effective equality as people with rights and to achieve equal representation in decision-making arenas, and for those reasons, we welcome the resolution adopted today (resolution 2122 (2013)).