

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

Statement by Mr. Seger, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations

Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to thank you for organizing this debate and for having made us give up our lunch for this good cause.

In the interests of time, I shall deliver an abbreviated version of my written statement, with a focus on four points to which my country attaches particular importance.

First, Switzerland puts particular stress on a gender-sensitive implementation of the transitional justice mechanisms. As Ms. Balipou pointed out earlier, women's perspectives and needs should be included in all four principles against impunity: the right to be informed, the right to justice, the right to reparations and the guarantee of non-recurrence. As we know from experience, violent conflict affects women and men differently, not only with respect to the types of violence suffered, especially sexually-based violence, but also based on their different biological and social roles and identities. Prosecutions for gender-based and sexist violence at the national and international levels are thus key to achieving reconciliation and reintegration in post-conflict societies. For example, when truth commissions investigate violations from a gender viewpoint, they identify the impact of those violations on women and men alike and can make recommendations that lead to specific gender-sensitive initiatives in terms of justice, reparation and institutional reform.

Secondly, archives are key to the fight against impunity, especially to the full realization of the right to be informed. Switzerland welcomes the work of the experts convoked at the initiative of the British Government on the prevention of gender-based violence, which makes good use of archives in order to expose sexual violence committed in conflict situations and to investigate crimes. Switzerland has seconded an expert to the working group and stands ready to contribute further expertise.

Thirdly, Switzerland welcomes the fact that the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/525) mentions the importance of access to safe abortion for women and girls who are victims of rape. Switzerland firmly believes that all women and girls have the right to control their own bodies and to be free from coercion and sexual violence. Given the increased exposure to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, those rights must be strictly guaranteed.

While Switzerland supports the Secretary-General's proposal to draft an independent study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the implementation of commitments made almost 15 years ago is one of our chief concerns, which leads to my final remark.

It is well known that Switzerland is one of the 22 States members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group, a transregional initiative that seeks to improve the working methods of the Security Council. My country notes that when resolutions on specific crises are adopted by the Security Council, they do not always take into account all the commitments made with regard to women, peace and security. Furthermore, their implementation differs greatly from one context to another.

Our country therefore urges the Security Council, among other matters, to ensure that gender advisers are deployed in all peace missions and that effective mechanisms are introduced so that information concerning the situation of women and girls can be presented in a systematic manner in reports and transmitted in Security Council debates. In that regard, Switzerland welcomes resolution 2122 (2013), adopted earlier today, which broadly accommodates the concrete recommendations in that sense. Nonetheless, it would have been better yet to have adopted the resolution after this debate in order to more fully take into account the views expressed by the participants.