



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**STATEMENT**

**by**

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to the United Nations**

**Open debate of the Security Council  
on**

**Women and Peace and Security: Preventing sexual violence in conflict through  
empowerment, gender equality and access to justice**

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**-Check against delivery-**

Mr. President,

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the distinguished representative of the European Union.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate on Women, Peace and Security with focus on preventing sexual violence in conflict through empowerment, gender equality and access to justice. It is crucial that the Security Council continues to address various aspects of conflicts within the framework of thematic debates. Today's debate also contributes significantly to a systematic advancement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the work and decision-making of the Security Council.

Mr. President,

Slovakia considers prevention to be the cornerstone of the UN efforts aimed at peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The WPS Agenda, together with the goals of inclusivity and gender equality, definitely fits into the broader prevention agenda of the Secretary-General. Women, Peace and Security Agenda is also instrumental in the achievement of the SDGs, especially SDG 5 and also SDG 16 that recognize gender equality, as well as peace, justice and strong institutions as global development priorities.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse* and commend his commitment and leadership related not only to the WPS Agenda, but also to his efforts in implementing a zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Having the right information is often the first step towards achieving our goals. For this reason, we welcome the launch of a dedicated website, in August 2017, on the system-wide response to sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as the development of a repository of national laws on sexual exploitation and abuse by the Special Coordinator.

The high-level meeting last September provided an important momentum with the establishment of the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations operations. The President of the Slovak Republic, H. E. Mr. Andrej Kiska, is a proud member of it. Slovakia has also become a signatory of the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, and we have provided a voluntary financial contribution to the Trust Fund in 2017. We encourage other States to show their solidarity with the victims and commitment to eradicate this scourge by signing the compact and providing financial support. We are of the view that a meeting proposed by the Secretary-General, to be convened in the margins of the general debate of the next session of the General Assembly, will contribute to building up the momentum and visibility of the empowerment of women and the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse.

Slovakia fully supports the approach of the Secretary-General, reiterated in his latest report, based on prioritizing the rights and dignity of victims. Member States, especially TCCs and PCCs, have to continue working closely with the UN in order to combat impunity and hold perpetrators accountable. Slovakia as one of the TCCs and PCCs also fully cooperates and will cooperate with the Secretary General. The Security Council should look more closely at the possibility of referrals to the International Criminal Court, when gender-based crimes are being committed. The solid case-law of international criminal tribunals relating to sexual violence can and should be used also in national proceedings against alleged perpetrators.

It is equally important to address the root causes of this scourge. As the Secretary-General has rightly identified in his report, *“weak State institutions, in particular justice systems, exacerbate these factors and can contribute to a climate of impunity.”* Justice systems in broad sense, including investigative bodies, have to adopt non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive approaches. We must not forget the need to provide easily accessible legal aid to victims; in this respect, civil society plays a crucial role.

As a Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform (SSR), Slovakia wishes to recall the UNSC Resolution 2151 on SSR which underscores the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of SSR processes. Gender-sensitive security sector reform is key to developing security sector institutions, that are non-discriminatory, representative of the population and capable of effectively responding to the specific security needs of diverse groups and so playing a crucial role in prevention. Reforming the security sector must also include the reform of recruitment processes and improvement in the delivery of security services to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence.

In conclusion Mr. President,

The international community is facing unprecedented challenges to global peace and security. Civilians – among them women and girls, as often the most vulnerable ones – are paying the highest price facing systematic violence and oppression. There is no doubt, we need to redouble our efforts to deliver changes on the ground in favour of women and girls and societies in regions affected by conflict.

I thank you.