



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  
Sexual Violence in Conflict**

**14 April 2021  
New York**

Mr. President,

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

Allow me to express my gratitude for organizing this open debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict. As conflicts continue to rage in various parts of the globe, innocent civilians are faced with unbearable suffering. Acts of sexual violence constitute extraordinarily appalling atrocities against civilians, targeted mostly against women and girls. The international community, while addressing the broader issue of attacks against civilians, must focus on the issue of sexual violence in conflict. This timely debate can contribute to that end.

My delegation shares and supports the Secretary-General's view that all approaches to conflict prevention and resolution, as well as recovery efforts must put at their core women's full, equal and meaningful participation and rights, including respect for bodily autonomy. We stress the importance of a holistic approach, including the need to address conflict-related sexual violence as part of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and to encompass not only prevention and protection from conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (SBV), but also to emphasize the importance of equitable and meaningful participation by women in the achievement of peace and security.

Mr. President,

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and the wider effects of conflict-related sexual violence echo across communities and generations. It is the responsibility of all States to support and assist survivors and to hold perpetrators to account. It is unacceptable that perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, both from States and non-state armed groups, should be allowed to continue to live in impunity. Full accountability for these crimes is one important factor in bringing justice to victims and Slovakia supports zero tolerance on all accounts.

In this regard, my delegation commends the leadership of the Secretary-General, as well as his commitment to this important agenda. We fully supported the launching, in 2017, of the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in UN operations, which the President of the Slovak Republic H.E. Zuzana Čaputová is a proud member of.

Pursuant to the recently published A4P+ priorities for 2021-2023, the accountability of peacekeepers and all members of the UN operations and missions to the populations they serve is a crucial component of our commitment to protect and maintain a violence-free environment. Effective prevention and implementation of misconduct risk management tools, together with a zero-tolerance policy towards sexually-based violence, are effective tools to mitigate the threat of SBV by members of missions.

In line with the latest C34 (Special Committee on peacekeeping Operations) recommendations, we would like to emphasize the need to prioritize the prevention of and response to SBV, including sexual violence in conflict, as an important component of the protection-of-civilian-mandates. Women peacekeepers play a positive role in the protection of civilians, including in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict.

Turning to the 2020 Report on Conflict-related Sexual Violence (S/2021/312),

Slovakia thanks the Secretary-General for this report which highlights relevant trends and developments, as well as contains a set of wide-ranging pertinent recommendations that, *inter alia*, include the demand for complete cessation, with immediate effect, of all acts of sexual violence by all parties to armed conflict, inclusion of sexual violence in sanctions designations and accountability, including by referring situations to the International Criminal Court. We believe that the Security Council, as well as individual States and international organizations should deliberate and act upon those recommendations.

Mr. President,

I wish to reiterate the importance of having gender-sensitive Security Sector Reform (SSR) strategies throughout their planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. We believe that Member States should redouble their SSR-related efforts to not only address but also to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. Where and as mandated, host State efforts within SSR to strengthen justice and accountability and implement survivor-centered approaches for the prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict should be supported.

Limited participation of women in the security sector institutions continues to impact the capacity of governments to effectively prevent conflicts and respond to the security needs of all members of their population. Therefore, the promotion of women's meaningful participation in the security sector is critical in efforts to build inclusive, accountable and legitimate institutions for sustainable peace and development.

To conclude,

The whole world is currently facing a surge of unprecedented crises engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to have grave impact on women and girls, both within and outside conflicts. The international community has to come together to tackle these challenges. Civilians – among them women and girls – are paying the highest price, facing systematic violence and oppression. 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.