

**STATEMENT OF H.E. FERNANDO CARRERA CASTRO
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GUATEMALA IN THE OPEN DEBATE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL**

**WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ARMED CONFLICT
(New York, June 24, 2013)**

Mr. President:

I am pleased and honored to be here again participating in an open debate of the Security Council.

My presence on this occasion is due to several reasons. First, it is a clear signal of our continued support to this forum. Secondly, it responds to your kind and timely personal invitation, Minister Hague, extended some months ago when we met in London, to discuss diverse multilateral matters of mutual interest to the United Kingdom and Guatemala. Third, it highlights the importance of the topic, which was also addressed during our Presidency of the Council in October of last year by issuing the Presidential Statement 2012/23. In the fourth place, I must say that in my professional life I have always been concerned with the grave problem of violence against women in general, and how it impacts in a diversity of ways on economic and social development, in all its dimensions. This violence, associated especially with the impunity resulting from weak institutions related to the rule of law, will surely form part, among other aspects, of the post-2015 development agenda that we will debate in the General Assembly. Finally, I can state that President Otto Pérez Molina views combating violence against women as an absolute priority of his Government. If we do not eradicate gender violence we will not have security and peace in Guatemala, nor anywhere else in the world.

Before moving on, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the Conceptual Note you circulated among us, and to express our appreciation to all four briefers, including Secretary-General Ban ki-moon and Ms. Zainab Bangura, for their presentations. We are also grateful for the Secretary-General's Report,¹ and express our appreciation to the Missions of India and

¹ A/67/792-S/2013/149 of 14 March, 2013.



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Rwanda for having organized the debates on this matter during their respective presidencies, in November of 2012 and April of 2013.

Mr. President,

Sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is an unacceptable phenomenon, a crime against humanity, and an insult to global conscience, as expressed in the actions of this Council and all organs of the United Nations. It has been the subject of numerous debates, Presidential Statements and resolutions of this Council, in this very hall. Its development has been built on the basic premise of Resolution 1325 (2000): without security for women, durable peace cannot be attained. This was followed with resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960, and today it was capped with the adoption of another resolution to expand the conceptual framework of the struggle against this scourge. Further, we have put in place concrete policies, including the creation of the post presently occupied by Madame Bangura, the assignment of experts to numerous peace-keeping operations, and others. However, the phenomenon persists, as we have sadly observed in situations like Syria, Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In other words, the Council acts, but, without denying the value of our pro-active stance, we must recognize that our concrete impact on the ground continues to be relatively modest. The question we must ask ourselves, then, is: what more can we do so that our decisions are translated in concrete actions?

One promising approach is found in a greater insistence in that member States press on, as a priority, with rule of law reforms and the strengthening of their national institutions, including the civil and military justice systems, to address sexual violence in situations of conflict and post-conflict, and to fight against the impunity of those that commit this type of crimes. In this endeavor, we feel that it is indispensable to involve civil society, and, specifically, the non-governmental organizations involved in this activity.

It is equally crucial to take actions on the present situations, where a majority of the victims of these crimes face a wall of impunity. We must act so that the truth comes out regarding the suffering of women, so that perpetrators are held accountable for their acts. To acknowledge the truth, undertake actions to achieve justice, and promote reconciliation, are minimal actions we must undertake to recuperate and re-establish the dignity of the victims.

Our own internal conflict was resolved over 15 years ago, but there still are hundreds of victims of sexual violence perpetrated by diverse armed actors. Happily and as already indicated, the prevention of violence against women is today a priority for the Guatemalan State. In recent years, a Law against Femicide and other forms of violence against women was adopted, as was the Law against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking,

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which allowed reforming the codification of various crimes in the Guatemalan Penal Code. Further, as a measure designed to promote the access of female victims of violence to justice, several programs were set up in the Executive and Judicial branches designed to eradicate the impunity that affects women. In this respect, our Ministry of the Interior, the Prosecutor's office and the courts, with the technical and financial support of various agencies of the United Nations System, has strengthened their capacity for prosecuting those crimes related with violence against women.

Just as it occurred in Guatemala, addressing sexual violence in situations of conflict or post-conflict should be reflected in concrete decisions contained in peace accords, especially in matters related to security and transitional justice. We support the Council's promotion of peace and reconciliation processes, Accords that put an end to conflicts, and that they address this issue explicitly, thus favoring the respect for the victim's dignity.

Finally, Guatemala strongly supports the elimination of obstacles in the way of the access of women to justice in situations of conflict or post-conflict. This was one of the topics of the Presidential Statement issued under our Presidency of the Security Council last October. Also in that Statement, as part of the fight against impunity regarding sexual violence, there appears a firm condemnation of all acts against women and girls that violate international law applicable to situations of armed conflict and situations of post-conflict.

In conclusion, we cannot sit by impassibly in the face of sexual violence in all categories as a source or consequence of armed conflicts. It is a phenomenon we must combat with all the means at our disposal, not only through promoting awareness on its magnitude, scope and characteristics, but also through the adoption of specific actions to address it in a decisive manner.

Thank you, Mr. President.