



# STOP RAPE NOW

UN ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

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*Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Expectations of the International Community*

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In the words of one peacekeeper, participating in firewood patrols to protect women in Darfur: “*If you want me to fly, first give me wings, and then you can say whether I flew well*”. This encapsulates what we are here to discuss: a capability-driven approach to peacekeeping. For operations to be effective, mandates must be matched with commensurate resources, appropriate training and sustained political support. So I thank the Governments of India and Norway for the opportunity to address these critical issues. My remarks will cover two related themes: firstly, how sexual violence has been recognized by the international community as a *security threat* that demands a *security response*; and how the *Inventory* – one of the background documents for this seminar – captures *untold stories* of concrete efforts to address it.

Everyone in this room has a role to play in making the Security Council Resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence a reality. I am convinced that *where there’s a political will, there’s a way*. For peacekeepers, helping to deter sexual violence is not just “the right thing to do”, it is essential to credibility and mission success.

Despite logistical and resource constraints, peacekeepers have developed enterprising practices, rather than be bystanders to atrocity. They have played a role in saying: *Not on our watch*. General Prakesh, who joins me on this panel, is one of the soldiers on the frontlines of these efforts. Indeed, the *Inventory* reflects a number of initiatives by Indian peacekeepers, like patrols tailored to women’s mobility patterns. In eastern DRC, I observed how MONUSCO market escorts have improved women’s sense of security and enabled them to resume trade, which contributes to development. Similarly, in Darfur, firewood patrols and the construction of fuel-efficient stoves have reduced the number of rapes. If women are unable to safely collect firewood and access markets or water-points, if girls are unable to safely get to school, socio-economic recovery will be stalled.

And yet, rape is still *slowest* to register on the security radar, and ranked *lowest* on a false hierarchy of wartime horrors. It is considered a “lesser evil”, though as one survivor from Bosnia told me: “*They have taken my life without killing me*”. The *Inventory* cites many examples of

rape as a security threat: as a vector of HIV during the Rwandan genocide; to shred the social fabric in DRC or Timor-Leste; in camps designed for the purpose of forced impregnation in Bosnia; and as a tool of political repression, as witnessed in Guinea, Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire. Right now, reports of rape by Gaddafi's forces are emerging from Libya, where an international operation to protect civilians is underway.

Acts of sexual violence on this scale and level of organization are not only *crimes against the victim* – they are *crimes against humanity*. This is everyone's business, from gender experts to Generals; from local police to international peacekeepers.

The *Inventory* is thus part of a broader process of expanding the constituency for action. But while this may be "everyone's business", it cannot be "business as usual". It's critical that peacekeepers establish a dialogue with women's groups and make full use of women community liaisons. Otherwise, they will not have a complete picture of the situation. Patrolling patterns must be adapted to places where women are unsafe – because women are not "innately vulnerable"; they are placed *at risk* by certain security factors and actors. Efforts to avert predictable risks, such as rape when women leave camps to collect firewood, must be routinely included in contingency plans. Indeed, since the process of compiling the *Inventory* began, we have seen a *virtuous cycle* of increased attention leading to more concerted action on the ground. That's why it is so important that these promising practices have been assembled for the first time in the 60-year history of peacekeeping, and made part of the UN's institutional memory.

To move from best intentions to best practice, peacekeepers must be armed with examples and information to help them operate more effectively. Rape can be stopped if we build the *skill* and the *will* to respond. We are not *creating* expectations – the issue and the expectations exist.

In the DRC, for example, the UN estimates that over 200,000 women have been raped during 12 years of war. I have met some of the mothers, sisters and daughters behind this mind-numbing figure. Not one of these women described rape as a part of her culture. The proliferation of rape and gang-rape – like the spread of guns or grenades – came with the war. So we must be clear: there are no "rape cultures", only cultures of violence and cultures of impunity.

Increasingly, it is understood that a situation is *not* secure when the war enters women's homes by night or their markets by day. In Liberia, I heard how the use of sexual violence during the civil war left a profound imprint on society. Rape is the number one reported crime in monthly police statistics. Today, UNMIL is supporting the transition from a "total war" – fought on the bodies of women and children – to a "total peace", in which *all* civilians are safe. I joined a night patrol with the Indian all-female Formed Police Unit – a powerful symbol that, in the new Liberia, women are protectors and role models. These peacekeepers have initiated self-defense training for women and girls in schools and community centers. This is an example of

transforming the once all-male domain of peacekeeping into an institution poised to promote women's basic rights.

Women are too often left behind in the transition from war to peace. If sexual violence has been part of the fighting, it must be part of the ceasefire and the peace process. Yet only 6 ceasefire agreements and 18 peace accords have ever mentioned sexual violence. Nonetheless, it *has* been increasingly featured in peacekeeping mandate authorizations and renewals. Are we, then, asking peacekeepers to do more with less? Are we expecting too much, or is preventing and addressing sexual violence central to the successful execution of their mandates?

This is one of the ways that peacekeeping will be tested in the coming years. In this respect, the world is watching. Addressing sexual violence is not a “niche” issue, but a core “protection of civilians” challenge. It is an example of the need to bolster the responsiveness of peacekeeping operations to the changing face of conflict. The practices in the *Inventory* show that steps are being taken. We can all play a part in disseminating and adding to this resource. That way, from the moment their boots touch the ground, tomorrow's peacekeepers will understand the issue in *operational*, not *theoretical*, terms. There will be guidelines and mission-wide strategies on the protection of civilians. There will be scenarios included in pre-deployment training – as General Cammaert will describe tomorrow – to prepare them to recognize sexual violence and react appropriately.

Protecting war-affected women is not *more* work, or even *new* work, for peacekeepers. It is a way of achieving existing mission objectives more effectively and comprehensively. A few years ago, addressing sexual violence in a gathering like this would have been unprecedented. Yet it is peacekeepers who are *themselves* demanding practical solutions to the types of atrocities they encounter in contemporary conflicts. And sexual violence has emerged as one of the defining characteristics of conflict in our time – a cheap yet highly effective method of terrorizing and displacing civilians. The way peacekeepers respond to such cases can affect the image of the mission and, in turn, the safety of the force. In the case of the Walikale mass rapes last August, forces in the area had only been on the ground for one month. They were just getting their bearings when the atrocities occurred. This underscores the need for *specific pre-deployment* training.

Alongside troop contributors and peacekeeping forces, my Office has a role to play in converting the Council's intention into action. In these efforts to link policy and practice, one thing is clear: *we are as strong as our partnerships*. I hope that the tools my Office is developing, will support broader protection efforts. These include: establishing monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements for improved information-flow; compiling a matrix of early-warning signs to help field personnel predict spikes in sexual violence; and building an accountability regime with real-world impact in the fight against impunity.

My Office is also working with DPKO and others to assess how the newly-mandated Women Protection Advisers can enhance capacity to monitor and report on sexual violence and to pursue dialogue with parties to conflict. In many remote and volatile regions, peacekeepers may be the “eyes and ears” of the international community, and the only ones able to raise the alarm. They can help to ensure that information flows from the country to the global level, where it can provide a basis for accountability and action.

I hope my Office can help to pave the way politically for effective and adequately-resourced operations. Before we can say whether our peacekeepers have “*flown well*”, it is fair to ask whether political or financial constraints have “*clipped their wings*”.

I will end by saying that, ten years into the Women, Peace and Security agenda, we have learnt so much, but standardized so little. The *Inventory* stimulates reflection on what is working and could be replicated; what is not working and should be reassessed; and what critical gaps remain. Peacekeepers are neither a panacea, nor a substitute for action by national authorities, but they are one piece of the overall protection puzzle. The *Inventory* marks the start – not the end – of an effort to build a “bank” of good practices as part of our investment in women’s security, which we know pays dividends for durable peace. It is conceived as a continual work in progress, to inform training and planning.

On a personal note, I am inspired by those who serve in peacekeeping missions. I hope this tool will support their work – work that can deter atrocities like mass rape, that continue to make the headlines, in a way their daily interventions rarely do.

Thank you – and I look forward to the opportunity for more in-depth discussion.