



Joint Statement by EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Kajsia Ollongren, and UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

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Around the world, girls and boys continue to be subjected to rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, trafficking, sexualised torture, and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by both State and non-State actors. On this International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, we stand united in condemning the use of sexual violence against children, including as a tactic of war, repression, and terror and we call for urgent and collective action to address these human rights violations that no child should have to endure.

These crimes inflict profound physical, psychological, and social harm, disrupt education and development, and leave scars that endure across generations. Sexual violence is one of the most horrific forms of violence used against children during armed conflicts, committed mainly against girls, but also targeting boys. Too often, stigma and fear silence survivors, while perpetrators continue to act with impunity.

Preventing and responding to these crimes requires a comprehensive, survivor-centered and trauma-informed approach. This includes strengthening child protection systems, ensuring accessible justice, providing reparation measures and holding perpetrators accountable while safeguarding survivors from re-traumatisation. To equip UN entities, governments, and civil society with essential knowledge and tools to systematically address conflict related sexual violence, the EU and the UN are working together through a joint project to foster global information sharing and capacity building across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts.

When it comes to prevention, early detection and recovery, caregivers - families, guardians, educators, and community leaders play a critical role. Women bear a disproportionate burden of care during and in the wake of war. It is crucial to empower them with knowledge, resources, and support as well as invest in education and awareness-raising to dismantle harmful social norms and stigma that prevent survivors from seeking help and impede their reintegration into their communities.

The United Nations and the European Union reaffirm their strong partnership in addressing conflict-related sexual violence, including the specialised interventions required for children. Through coordinated action, we support national authorities, civil society, and frontline responders in raising awareness, delivering services, strengthening legal frameworks, and advancing accountability. In Ukraine, the EU and the UN are collaborating to strengthen

institutional capacities to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, including through coordination with civil society and enhanced accountability mechanisms. We must send a clear and unequivocal message that such crimes will not go unpunished. We also emphasise the importance of integrating child protection into peace processes, security sector reform and humanitarian responses. To reinforce these efforts, the European Union will leverage its new strategic approach on humanitarian diplomacy, which prioritises the protecting of children and addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

Today, we urge all UN Member States, parties to conflict, and the international community to uphold their obligations under international law, including the rights of the child and the protection of children from all forms of sexual violence. Commitments must translate into concrete action, adequate funding, and sustained political will. No child should have to experience the pain and humiliation of rape and violence.

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