



SRSB ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT, MARGOT WALLSTRÖM, MEETS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN, 18 JUNE 2010

The Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation, Gunilla Carlsson, opened the meeting by emphasizing that women's rights in general and their security needs in particular are a top priority for Sweden. SRSB Wallström continued by highlighting that sexual violence in conflict is not "mission impossible", but "mission irresistible". She explained the work of her office, the work of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action), and shared experiences from her recent missions to DRC and Liberia. She explained her 5-point agenda and why sustained advocacy is so crucial.

STRUCTURED QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY Empowerment/Women's groups

Q: How will the SRSB work to increase the number of women in negotiation teams and in reconstruction work in post-conflict settings?

The SRSB affirmed that women can play a crucial role in peace processes and the solution to ensure their participation in negotiation teams is affirmative action. There should never be any peace negotiations without women around the table.

Q: There seems to be a missing link between strategies for empowerment and peacekeeping operations. How will the SRSB approach this?

The SRSB replied that due to the changing dynamics of conflict, peacekeeping operations must be formulated differently to integrate a gender perspective. A step in the right direction is the upcoming publication of a document entitled *Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence - An Analytical Inventory of Peacekeeping Practice*, capturing innovative practices by peacekeepers to protect civilians from sexual violence.

Q: A representative from a Christian NGO asked the SRSB for a message that she could convey to their partnering church in Liberia.

The SRSB responded that the churches in Liberia can play an important role in breaking the stigma and public prejudices that surround rape victims, she should encourage the church to approach this.

Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security

Q: How will the SRSB look at the relationship between Security Council Resolution 1820 and 1325?

The SRSB answered that the basis of 1820 is to be found in 1325, they are closely linked, but as there was little progress with the sexual violence/prevention aspect of 1325, 1820 was adopted to strengthen the work and make it more practical.

Q: How does the SRSB view the UN's capability to interact with oppressive governments?

The SRSB stated that the Security Council has to be ready to use all measures at their disposal to influence States. The ICC is a very useful tool as well.

A broader perspective: Power and violence

Q: The commercialization of sexual violence in the DRC seems to have led to false allegations. While so much money goes to sexual violence, one may argue that women should not need to be raped to receive help?

The SRSB replied that she thought it was the opposite way around; the media focus on sexual violence is good and has led to other issues in the conflict finally receiving attention. Furthermore, thus far we do not know of any survivor who has received compensation.

Q: Sexual violence should be seen as a symptom of the inequalities in society, rather than a primary cause in itself. How will the SRSB use the UN system to change the unequal structures in society, and which concrete methods will she use to achieve her mandate?

The SRSB responded that she is focusing on her strict mandate, and in order to be effective she will not interpret it more widely than it is. Her mandate strengthens the 1325 agenda, which is the foundational resolution.

Q: How does the SRSB interpret her mandate in relation to men as victims of sexual violence?

The SRSB replied that this is something that needs attention as it is a violation of human rights as well as an expression of a power imbalance that her team would like to work to understand better.

Legal systems/Rule of law and sexual violence

Q: What are the UN's chances of ending the climate of impunity in the DRC?

The SRSB stated that she is concerned about the situation in the DRC as MONUC has to drawdown a number of troops, and the successor mission MONUSCO will be more limited. Even though the government may be happy about this, we have to continue to put pressure on the government to work for human rights.

Q: What is the SRSB's opinion on the UN, the EU, NATO and AU "all doing the same thing at the same time"? What are the SRSB's views on the fear of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) allegations among soldiers?

The SRSB replied that she hopes to visit AU this fall and aims to find a partner in the EU as well. The rules of engagement may have to be changed to be more specific to each context and more reality based. Regarding SEA allegations, she argued that the fact that the fear of SEA allegations separate peacekeepers from protecting the host population is unacceptable and she urged for rules on this. She also emphasized that every single SEA case must be carefully looked at and sanctions must be taken in the peacekeeper's home country.

Other

Q: What is the SRSB's opinion on the link between militarism, disarmament and women's security?

The SRSB stated that it is highly important to reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons to ensure women's security and affirmed that she saw the importance of this in the DRC.

Q: How will the SRSB ensure that child victims, particularly girls, are not forgotten in her work?

The SRSB replied that her office would not forget children, and she mentioned that one staff member had a child protection background. In Liberia it is mainly the rape of children that is being reported, as women do not find a reason for reporting that they themselves have been raped. She also described the current complexity of listing perpetrators of sexual violence against children only, signaling that sexual violence against children is criminal, while sexual violence against women is normal.

Q: Will the SRSB use new technology in the work against conflict-related sexual violence?

The SRSB stated that modern technology can be a very useful method to reach out and hear the voices of women. The SRSB suggested the use of radio dramas/soap operas as one way, and asked the audience to send her other ideas as well.

PRESS CONFERENCE – Questions and Answers

The substitute Director-General of SIDA, Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, opened the press conference and the SRSB continued by briefly introducing her mandate, her 5-point agenda and the work of her office and UN Action. She mentioned the situation of sexual violence in Kyrgyzstan and stated that today those who claim that sexual violence does *not* occur in a situation of armed conflict and displacement will have to prove it.

Q: What does the SRSB think her office will be able to accomplish?

The SRSB replied that the Security Council should use all their available sanctions and she is hoping the ICC will deliver some promising judgments as well, for instance in the Bemba case. She noted that in order to achieve her mandate she will have to prioritize.

Q: How often do survivors of sexual violence dare to report?

The SRSB stated that what we see and hear is only the tip of the iceberg. In Liberia, for instance, it is mainly offences against children that are being reported.