



STOP RAPE NOW

UN ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

Security Council Open Meeting on

“Women, Peace and Security: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence”

Statement by UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Margot Wallström

New York, 23 February 2012

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

On the morning of the 30th of September 2009, two dramatically different events took place. One, that you are all familiar with, was the adoption of **Resolution 1888**: creating the mandate of UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The other was a demonstration, *just outside the UN complex*, condemning mass rape by security forces in the small West African nation of **Guinea**. As this Council reached consensus on new measures to combat sexual violence, *beyond its Chamber* protestors decried yet more premeditated mass rape. As world public opinion applauded the commitments of this body, international headlines told of soldiers raping in broad daylight. Some Council members noted the connection between Resolution 1888 and the use of rape to suppress a peaceful rally in Guinea-Conakry. They noted that when rape is part of the **repertoire of conflict or political coercion**, it is a form of **collective violence** that can threaten **collective peace and security**.

I would like to congratulate the Council for its **groundbreaking consideration** of that issue over the past three years, and to thank the Presidency of Togo for convening today’s debate. This is a chance to take stock of a fundamental question: namely, *whether the **gap** between what is said in this Chamber, and what happens in the world beyond, has narrowed*.

Last November, I went to Guinea to meet with the survivors. A young woman, who had been gang-raped and left for dead, after joining the demonstration, recalled the chilling words of one soldier: “**You wanted power – this is what you will get**”. What was striking to me was not how many women had been scarred by this atrocity, but how many have stood back up, organized and dared to tell their stories. Their demands for recognition, justice and the removal of perpetrators from positions of power are now reflected in a **Joint Communiqué** the Government has signed with the United Nations.

Earlier this month, a Guinean panel of judges charged **Lieutenant Colonel Moussa Tiegboro Camara** for his alleged role in the atrocities. This is progress. It signals to the survivors that while justice may have been *delayed*, it cannot be *denied*. In that respect, the report before you today is already partly out of date. It calls upon the Guinean authorities to take action against Camara; in the time between issuing the report and today’s debate, they have done so.

But, of course, conflict-related sexual violence is not specific to one country or continent: it is a **global risk**. The terror of unarmed women facing armed men is age-old and universal. The Security Council has led the way in recognizing that rape can acquire a strategic twist as a **tactic of war**. There is, today, broad

recognition that the more brutal and shocking the crime, the more effectively it terrorizes communities into submission, and lends notoriety to groups vying for power.

The terms of the debate have shifted from *reacting* to sexual violence like any other tragedy, to *preventing* it like any other threat. Instead of talking about women's wartime suffering – year after year after year – **protection mechanisms** have been established. Instead of seeing the same few women – in meeting after meeting – we are building a **broad coalition**.

The **circle of stakeholders** now extends to peacekeepers, peacemakers, war crimes prosecutors, and the full range of protection actors. After all, it is at the moment of negotiating a peace deal, signing a ceasefire, training troops and sending peacekeepers on patrol, that these **resolutions have real-world impact**.

In short: the Council has ushered in an **ideological shift**. And when it takes notice, so do others.

A decade ago, my mandate to be present in this Chamber, addressing this subject, would have seemed improbable. Yet this Council has kept pace with the **changing dynamics of conflict**. In contemporary wars, it has become more dangerous to be a woman fetching water or collecting firewood, than to be a fighter on the frontline. Wars have entered the marketplaces where women trade; they follow children en route to school; and haunt the prison cells where political activists are detained. Accordingly, the Council has embraced a view of security that includes the physical integrity and perspectives of women. During my visits to countries of concern, I have promised to **bridge** the voices of these women to the work of this body. At the political level, these visits can initiate a dialogue for civilian protection commitments.

My aim is to remain relevant to the Security Council and to ensure that this mandate **adds value** to your work. Resolution 1888 also created a **Team of Experts on the rule of law**, which is currently supporting initiatives of the **Governments of Guinea, Liberia, South Sudan and the DRC** to combat impunity. It is clear that *now more than ever* we have the tools to succeed.

One such tool is the **report** being debated today. It provides striking examples of sexual violence as a threat to security and impediment to peacebuilding. No one can read this report and remain unmoved. But, as many of you have asked me: *What does it mean to appear in the Secretary-General's report?* I would like to address that head-on, by highlighting three key implications:

- **Firstly**, this report (based on UN-verified information) is an **instrument in the hands of political leaders** to help them track and address sexual violence that is linked with insecurity. It cites illustrative incidents that point to larger patterns. As the new **Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements** mature, they will yield a deeper **evidence base for action**.
- **Secondly**, it does not just highlight *horror stories*; these reports are a place to feature the stories of **actions that have made a difference**. Actions like enforcing command responsibility and vetting perpetrators from the security forces. It is in the interests of every government to ensure that the national uniform symbolizes professionalism, discipline and service, not rape, pillage and terror.
- The **third point** is that it provides a **baseline for systematic engagement with parties** to armed conflict, with the consent and partnership of governments. These reports are vehicles for putting names to some of history's complex horrors. The acts of sexual torture and terror recorded here are

not inevitable byproducts of war, but crimes committed by combatants and their commanders. The “fog of war” does not absolve them of that responsibility.

The report is also a **historical record**. This is critical, as **the history of rape has been a history of denial**. *What explains the suppression of these stories?* Perhaps the fact that the *victim* – not the *attacker* – is often shamed and stigmatized; that society is more likely to *pass judgment*, than to *deliver justice*. Perhaps it is because rape has been treated as a “lesser evil” in a context of lethal violence; or traded away by negotiating parties as the price of peace. Whatever the explanation: every speaker who adds their voice to this debate is helping to **end centuries of silence** that have made rape an effective “secret weapon”.

From the **Congo to Cambodia**, from **Bosnia to Liberia**, these crimes have been neglected at the peace table and stricken from the public record. In **Bosnia**, I met with women who had survived the hell of rape camps in the early nineties. Sixteen years on, I expected to talk about memorials and remembrance. I expected to talk about women’s political power and economic recovery. But what we talked about was the rapes that these women are *living* and *reliving* every day, as if it were yesterday. The lack of redress and justice is staggering. An estimated 50,000 rapes have led to just 30 prosecutions. When **Bosnia** was on the Security Council, it recognized this painful reality, and actively championed Resolution 1960. In **Cambodia** last year, women organized an informal hearing to spotlight sexual violence during the Khmer Rouge era that has been left unaddressed by formal mechanisms. Collectively, they broke over 30 years of silence. I have urged the Governments of both Bosnia and Cambodia to deliver justice for these victims. In **Rwanda**, **children born of rape** are coming of age and trying to find their place in society. So rape is not over when it’s over. The point is to better understand conflict-related sexual violence and its consequences; **to give rape a history, in order to deny it a future**.

At its heart, Resolution 1960 is about *prevention*. It creates – for the first time – a workable system of deterrence and accountability in response to conflict-related sexual violence. This **compliance regime** includes a **listing option** as leverage. In relation to other protection issues, such as ending the recruitment of child soldiers, the practice of listing has yielded tangible results. Expanding the “**naming and shaming**” list on children to those credibly suspected of patterns of sexual violence against *adult* women and men has made the approach *comprehensive* and the message to armed groups *clear*. The point is to cease *all* acts of rape, whether the victim is 8, 18 or 80. I will never forget the story of an elderly woman I met in eastern **DRC**, who told me that she had felt secure in the belief that she was “too old” to be raped, that she could be “the soldier’s grandmother”. But this did not protect her.

While not a panacea, the list is an important tool. It reminds those who commit, command or condone sexual violence that they **can no longer sleep easily at night under the cover of impunity and anonymity**. The practice of listing shows that this is not just a war of words. *Yes*, preventive diplomacy is important. *And yes*, zero tolerance policies matter. But ultimately, rape must carry consequences. Some have said this exercise is too optimistic, too ambitious. But surely we must bring *all* measures to bear in addressing this scourge.

The vision is to create conditions in which armed groups see sexual violence as a **liability** that will invite **national and international scrutiny and censure** unless concrete measures are taken. These measures are outlined in Resolution 1960, as a basis for delisting. They include: the issuance of orders through

chains of command, the prohibition of sexual violence in Codes of Conduct, as well as timely investigation of alleged abuses to hold perpetrators accountable. A command structure with the capacity to sustain military operations and to punish deserters, has the capacity to rein in acts of rape.

Those who tolerate sexual terror should be on notice that they do so in defiance of the Security Council, with its power to enact enforcement measures. In the case of **Côte d’Ivoire**, for example, this means the militiamen who threatened to burn women alive if they resisted rape. They know why they appear in this list. The Council has signaled its intention to consider sexual violence when establishing or renewing **sanctions regimes**. Exemplary action has already been taken by your Sanctions Committee for the DRC in relation to Mayi-Mayi leader **Ntaberi Ntabo Cheka**. This sends a powerful message to others.

Mr. President,

As a frame of reference, the term “**conflict-related sexual violence**” has been critical in channeling relevant information from country-level to the Security Council. This framing mirrors the Resolutions by focusing on violence that has a nexus with peace and security, rather than on isolated incidents. Isolated acts of rape occur in all societies – in times of war or peace. These crimes need to be addressed by the national law and order machinery. But when sexual violence is driven by the dynamics of conflict, is widespread or systematic, constitutes a grave breach of International Humanitarian Law, or is used for military and political gain, it also warrants consideration by *this body*, in line with its competence under the *UN Charter*.

As a process of intimidation, targeted rape is often a *precursor* to conflict, as well as the *last weapon to be relinquished* in its wake. It is important not to exclude from consideration sexual violence that **continues after the guns fall silent**. Sexual violence that is normalized owing to impunity, or committed by recently demobilized combatants, is also a security issue that requires a security response. Such violence subverts efforts to cement the peace.

We know that a **ceasefire** does not mean peace for women if the shooting ceases, but the rapes continue unchecked. This should be reflected in the definition of a ceasefire and in the monitoring provisions. Monitoring teams must be *gender balanced*, not *gender blind*. But, to date, just three ceasefire agreements have included sexual violence. The new *Guidance for Mediators on Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, developed by DPA, will fill an analytical and practical gap.

Modern history attests that “post-war” rarely means “post-rape”. In **Liberia**, I have seen how sexual violence during the civil war left a **profound imprint on society**. Addressing this legacy is not just a *moral*, but an *operational*, imperative. It is a credibility test for the nascent military and police forces. To echo what has been said so often within these walls: impunity fuels the vicious cycle of violence. Peace is not only the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice.

Nor can we overlook the use or threat of sexual violence as a **tool of political repression** and civil strife. That would negate the promise of prevention. Politically-motivated rape is a disturbing trend witnessed in the wake of contested elections in places such as **Kenya, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire**. It has also been part of political violence in **Libya, Syria and Egypt**.

In relation to **Syria**, the Secretary-General has expressed concern about the sexual abuse of men in **detention**, as a method of extracting intelligence. In **Libya**, UN information indicates a pattern of women being abducted from their homes, cars and streets, and subjected to repeated rape, during the conflict. Yet survivors are only coming forward in cases of urgent medical need. In the words of one Libyan victim: *“If the bleeding had stopped, I would never have reported it”*. This underscores that we cannot wait for “hard data” to surface before taking action. The relationship between *incidents* and *reports* of wartime rape is like the relationship between the tip and the mass of an iceberg. Only the extremity is visible. I trust that your forthcoming Resolution on Libya will explicitly mention the need to address sexual violence. A critical test of the National Transitional Council will be its willingness to investigate violations by *both sides* of the conflict and to ensure comprehensive services for survivors.

Due to the blame, shame and stigma, most survivors still have more to *lose* than to *gain* from reporting rape. **Improved data-collection** is therefore inextricably linked with **improved assistance**. Our primary focus must always be *needs, rather than numbers*. Data is not an end in itself, but an evidence-base for action.

And we must deliver as one. I am proud to Chair the inter-agency network, **UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict**. UN Action has provided strategic support at country-level, and catalyzed joint initiatives such as **scenario-based training** for peacekeepers, in partnership with UN Women and DPKO.

But in terms of response, for *too long*, we have been *too late*. The UN system is working to become better attuned to the “red flags” and **early-warning** signs. Rape is not a “fact of human history”, like disease or drought; it is often *planned* and therefore *predictable*. UN Action has scanned past conflicts to compile a *Matrix of Early-Warning Indicators* to equip monitors to identify and prevent spikes.

This analysis also sheds light on the **roots** of wartime rape. For instance, the proliferation of **small arms and light weapons** enable these atrocities. As many women have told me: *“That man had the gun, and he had the power”*. Sexual violence is often perpetuated by incomplete disarmament and the absence of vetting, training and **security sector reform**. For example, in **Somalia**, a practice has recently been detected of national security forces renting out their uniforms to civilians by night, which facilitates rape. Such patterns must be met with disciplinary measures. We also know that **militarized mining** can fuel human rights violations by enriching armed groups, for instance in the DRC.

This Council has understood that *there can be no security without women’s security*. The aim is not only to protect women *from* violence; it is to protect them *to* participate in public and economic life. Rape has a chilling effect on women’s political participation, casting a long shadow of trauma and terror. It can inhibit their access to polling booths and public squares. We must send a message that women’s *lives* and *votes* and *voices* count, and will be counted. Certainly, the women I have met cannot be caricatured as passive victims. They have fought daily wars – not for medals and monuments – but battles for bread, battles to feed their children, and to make their presence felt. I am particularly concerned, at this historical juncture, that unless women can shape their own political and personal destiny, the Arab Spring will turn into a winter for Arab women.

While sexual violence disproportionately affects women and girls, **men and boys** also number among the *direct and indirect* victims. We need to ensure that our interventions are *gender-responsive* and *community-based*.

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

In the wake of war, the aim is not just to “build back”, but to “**build back better**”. This means addressing pre-existing injustice and inequality. What we have already achieved gives us hope. The action of this Council tells survivors that their lives matter. It also tells perpetrators – and *potential perpetrators* – that **war does not mean license to rape**. The world *is* watching.

I would like to conclude by taking a step back from the technical and operational details that often consume us, to simply recall that this Council has *changed the way we think about rape*. From the 1907 *Hague Convention* that gave wartime rape a glancing reference as a crime against “family honor”, sexual violence is now seen as a self-standing threat to security. This has validated the experience of survivors. And in the end, that kind of *transformation* is what this work is all about.

Thank you and I look forward to the debate.