



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

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Statement

by

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to the United Nations

Open Debate (VTC) – “Sexual Violence in Conflict”

United Nations Security Council

Wednesday 14th April 2021
10:00 am
New York

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Thank you for the floor Mr. President and for your work in convening this important meeting. We also thank our distinguished briefers, SRSG Patten, Dr Mukwege, Ms Atim and Ms Attinger Colijn for your thoughtful, yet sobering briefings.

The world has been gripped by intersecting crises and inequalities of epic proportions. These conditions have compounded the experience and increased rates of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, particularly against women and girls. Today, we recommit to ending the enduring inequalities, protracted conflict, and underdevelopment, which contribute to unconscionable levels of conflict-related sexual violence. At a time when Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is confronted with a severe crisis of explosive volcanic eruptions, in addition to the social and economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, we speak with an even deeper sense of pain, urgency, and commitment to addressing humanity's suffering.

First, we commend the invaluable contribution of women civil society, including, for example, the women protection networks in Darfur, facilitating referrals and working to enhance the profiling of perpetrators of sexual violence. Further, we condemn any attacks against women's civil society networks.

Secondly, underreporting, resulting from fear of reprisals and shame, remains an enduring challenge. With this in mind, we call for survivor-centred responses that prioritise women's and girls' desires at various stages of their trauma and recovery experience. Women's civil society and community organisations, working to prevent and respond to sexual violence, must be consistently funded and supported as they perform critical prevention, response and recovery work with women, girls and children.

We recognise important actions to address conflict-related sexual violence, including:

- The establishment of one-stop centres in South Sudan;
- Specialised courts in all 34 provinces in Afghanistan, with 32 headed by women;
- The launch of the sexual and gender-based violence helpline in the DRC by the UN; and
- The support of the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in providing model legislative guidance on conflict-related sexual violence to national authorities.

Notwithstanding important progress made, effective, comprehensive, women and girl-led actions against conflict-related sexual violence remain elusive. This brings me to my third point, which is also related to the on-going pandemic: With funding being divested toward pandemic mitigation measures, we urge authorities to designate sexual and gender-based violence response, as central to pandemic recovery, planning and funding. Displaced and refugee women and girls are among the most affected during the pandemic. We call for the inclusion or retention of key health and psychosocial services, as national emergency response plans are adapted over time. Such plans must also include adequate socio-economic recovery and reintegration support.

Further, continued collaboration between regional organisations and the UN, to support the development, operationalisation and adaptation of survivor-centred national action plans remain crucial. Diverse women and girls, civil society and community organisers must occupy central roles in decision-making, budgeting, design, implementation and the monitoring of compliance. The enduring effects of rape, trafficking, sexual slavery and terrorism against women and girls by armed terrorist groups, operating across borders, further emphasise the need for national, regional and multilateral cooperation. This includes joint up

cross-border monitoring and response capabilities. Ongoing regional and multilateral support to strengthen national accountability frameworks is necessary to, not only end impunity, but also to ensure reparations for survivors and victims.

Finally, mandate authorisations, renewals and implementation must prioritise gender analysis and gender justice, with the requisite focus on participation, prevention, protection, relief and recovery, including the consistent deployment of women protection advisers to all peacekeeping and political missions. Eliminating conflict-related sexual violence requires multi-level, multi-actor approaches that are tied to broader gender responsive security and development actions.

I thank you.