

## **STATEMENT BY THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**24 SEPTEMBER 2013**

### **OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING (HDIM)**

#### **SESSION 3: Tolerance and Non-discrimination: Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict**

Madam Moderator

I fully subscribe to the views expressed by the European Union. But I would like to add a few remarks from our national perspective.

The widespread use of rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflicts around the world is one of the greatest, most persistent and most neglected injustices. It represents one of the most serious violations of an individual's human rights. It can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and it impedes the restoration of international peace and security. The British Government has made tackling this issue a high Foreign Policy priority, using its Presidency of the G8 in 2013 to mobilise the international community. You can see some results of that in the G8 Foreign Ministers' Declaration from April 2013 and UNSCR 2106 that was adopted in June.

We must put an end to impunity, promote justice and provide greater support to victims. To succeed we need political will coupled with real practical action. In addition to our global efforts, the UK is working with Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on addressing the legacy of sexual violence in the Balkans conflict, in amongst other country engagements outside of the OSCE area.

Later today at the UN General Assembly in New York, the British Foreign Secretary will chair a side event to launch a Declaration on the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict. We hope this will achieve the widest possible support. He has established a group of Champions from around the world who will help to ensure this message is heard and sustained. Six of the Champions are from OSCE participating States and another is a Partner for Cooperation.

The UNGA Declaration reaffirms the view of the G8 that serious sexual violence in conflict constitutes a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions. And it supports the development of an International Protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict at national, regional and international levels. We are pursuing a number of steps to achieve this. This includes working:

- To strengthen the efforts of regional organisations to prevent and respond to sexual violence.
- To ensure national military and police doctrine and training is in accordance with international law so as to enable more effective prevention and response.
- To ensure that all peace, security and conflict mediation processes explicitly recognise the need to prevent, respond to and reduce crimes of sexual violence in conflict.

- To ensure women's active, full and equal participation in all conflict prevention and resolution, justice and security sector processes.
- To embed the need to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict resolution efforts, and activities aimed at promoting development and building sustainable peace.
- To encourage, support and protect the efforts of civil society organisations, including women's groups and human rights defenders, to improve the monitoring and documentation of cases of sexual violence in conflict.

All of these activities could and should involve OSCE participating States, its Institutions and Field missions, not to mention many of the NGOs represented here. We would welcome their ideas and suggestions for activities; here are some specific ideas we have:

- The High Level Military Doctrine Seminars held under the auspices of Vienna Document 2011 could include this topic, as could discussions on the Code of Conduct for Politico-Military Aspects of Security – specifically its provisions on International Humanitarian Law.
- Training organised by the Strategic Police Matters Unit could include the investigation and prosecution of cases of sexual violence.
- Within the OSCE's work on the Conflict Cycle and Mediation, preventing sexual violence should be addressed.
- And finally I believe there is a benefit to all participating States of the development of an Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, as this entails some similar and mutually reinforcing themes.

In conclusion the international community can - and must - do more to prevent and respond to these acts of barbarism. The OSCE is well placed to make such a contribution: now is the time to act.

Thank you.