

19 June 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Security Council Thematic Debate on “Women, Peace and
Security: Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict”**

Madame President of the Security Council,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates

May I begin by thanking H.E. Secretary of State of the United States, for convening this important meeting on sexual violence in armed conflict situations. I would also like to thank Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for his invitation to address the Security Council.

Today's debate focuses on a security issue that has deep social consequences. As Secretary Rice rightly pointed out in her introductory remarks, national institutions should be measured by their ability to protect the most vulnerable members of society, particularly women and children.

I would like to add in the same context that international institutions, especially the United Nations, must be also measured by their ability to protect the most vulnerable ones, particularly women and children.

Excellencies,

At the General Assembly thematic debate on human security in May Member States emphasized the importance of more effectively integrating human security perspectives into the peace and security work of the United Nations. Particularly so, as this year we mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Comprehensive, integrated and people-centered solutions at the crossroads between security, development and human rights must be at the heart of our efforts to fight gender-based crimes against women and girls in conflict situations.

To this end, the Assembly adopted a groundbreaking resolution this session urging all Member States to take special measures to eliminate rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict situations. Among several other measures, the resolution also calls on the United Nations system to integrate programmes to eliminate violence against women across its work.

The Security Council took a principled view on some of these issues in 2000, by adopting Resolution 1325 that for the first time specifically addressed the impact of war on women. It also

acknowledged that women's contribution to conflict resolution had been under-valued and under-utilized.

While some progress has been made in a number of areas covered by the resolution several reviews have revealed that much stronger and more coordinated efforts are needed to fully implement its terms.

Clearly we all have to do more to prevent human rights violations against women and girls in situations of armed conflict, do more to punish the perpetrators, and end the impunity of war crimes violators.

Armed conflict has a disproportionately negative impact on women. Sexual violence against women is not only an affront to our human dignity, but an inherent and grave threat to our human security. When it is authorized and perpetrated as an instrument of war one cannot express in words the utter indecency.

It is my strong belief that women must be assured equal and full participation in conflict resolution and peace building processes, and represented in the structures and institutions realized from any peace dividend to ensure that it lasts.

Excellencies,

The interconnected nature of the issues we are discussing today were highlighted at the General Assembly's recent High-level debate on Human Trafficking, which also considered aspects of sexual violence against women and girls.

Our discussions illustrated that in many instances human trafficking for sexual exploitation is intrinsically linked with conflict situations.

Human trafficking thrives against the backdrop of conflict, poverty and discrimination. Members of the General Assembly all committed themselves to do more to put the existing normative framework into practice globally.

I would also like to highlight the General Assembly's work on the rights of the child that lead to the establishment of the Office of the SRSG for children and armed conflict, and, the Security Council's working group on this issue, which demonstrate that together we can effectively tackle issues that span security and human rights.

Excellencies,

It is clear that when the General Assembly and the Security Council take a principled stand, increase our visibility and coordination on cross-cutting issues, such as sexual violence in armed conflict situations, the overall effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations is strengthened.

I hope that we can continue to engage in a productive policy dialogue on this and other human security issues that affect our work and our common mission.

Thank you.