

Event to commemorate the 7th official observance of the

International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

co-hosted by the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict and the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations

“Building back better: Supporting survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in the context of pandemic recovery”

Virtual Room 11, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Thursday, 17 June 2021 – Live webcast available at: <http://webtv.un.org/>

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#### ***Background & objectives:***

The chronic underreporting of conflict-related sexual violence, due to stigma, insecurity, fear of reprisals, and lack of services, has been compounded by COVID-19 containment measures<sup>1</sup>. Lockdowns, curfews, quarantines, fears of contracting or transmitting the virus, mobility restrictions, and limited access to services and safe spaces, as shelters closed and clinics were repurposed for the pandemic response<sup>2</sup>, added a layer of complexity to existing structural, institutional and sociocultural barriers to reporting. Proactive measures to **foster an enabling environment for survivors to safely come forward and seek redress** have become more urgent than ever. The pandemic has laid bare the intersecting inequalities that plague our societies, as compounded by conflict, displacement, and institutional fragility. The only solution for these overlapping ills is an injection of political resolve and resources equal to the scale of the challenge.

**Building back better** in the wake of this pandemic requires an **inclusive, intersectional, and gender-informed approach**. Pandemic recovery demands a paradigm shift: to silence the guns; amplify the voices of women, girls and all survivors; move boldly towards gender equality and address the root

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<sup>1</sup> OSRSG-SVC “Implications of COVID-19 for the prevention of and response to CRSV”: <https://bit.ly/3fDc6Mw>

<sup>2</sup> OSRSG-CAAC “Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violations against children in situations of armed conflict”: <https://bit.ly/3oGvc8w>

causes of conflict; invest in public welfare rather than the instruments of warfare, by reducing military expenditure and strengthening institutions; and shift the security paradigm to foster human security and the resilience of individuals and communities to social, environmental and economic shocks.

A gender-responsive global recovery from COVID-19 should not aim for a return to the pre-pandemic status quo, but instead promote a new social contract in which no one in power is above the law, and no one rendered powerless is beneath the protection of the law, with the ultimate goal of achieving true equality and justice. It entails decisive action to mitigate risks and prevent sexual violence, and to ensure that no one is left behind in the response.

Responses must be **comprehensive, multisectoral, age-appropriate and survivor-centered**, including life-saving medical care, sexual and reproductive health services, psychosocial support, livelihood assistance, socioeconomic reintegration support, and access to justice. Service coverage must reach survivors in rural, remote and border areas, as well as in refugee and displacement settings (S/2021/312 – <https://bit.ly/3eqbPgB>).

In line with the General Assembly Resolution of 2015 (A/RES/69/293), a virtual event will be held to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. This International Day is commemorated every year on or around 19 June, which marks the date of the adoption of the first Security Council resolution to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war and threat to international peace and security (S/RES/1820 of 2008). The purpose of this event is to **stand in solidarity with the survivors and those working to support them on the frontlines, often at great personal risk, particularly in the current climate of intersecting crises**. The event will provide a platform for strategic reflection on ways to integrate the specific rights, needs and perspectives of survivors of CRSV into national and regional COVID-19 response and recovery plans, to ensure they are not forgotten in a climate of intersecting crises and constrained resources. .

#### ***Event format:***

The event will consist of an opening segment by the organisers, followed by a statement from a Global Champion for the Fight against Sexual Violence in Conflict. In addition, a Digital Book (<https://bit.ly/2RHUIhb>) compiling first-hand testimonies from survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and frontline service-providers, including UN Women’s Protection Advisers (WPAs), will be launched during the event. One of the contributors to the Digital Book will deliver a statement on the impact of COVID-19, including recommendations for an effective response and inclusive recovery. The coordinated work of the United Nations in ‘delivering as one’ in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence will be presented by a member of the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict network, which is chaired by the SRSG-SVC. To conclude, representatives of Member States and Regional Groups will be invited to make brief interventions.<sup>3</sup>

#### ***Opening Segment:***

*Moderator: Chief of Staff, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mr. Tonderai Chikuhwa*

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<sup>3</sup> Member States and Regional Groups wishing to make an intervention are requested to contact the Permanent Mission of Argentina (Ms. Pilar Eugenio: [euo@mrecic.gov.ar](mailto:euo@mrecic.gov.ar)) to inscribe on the speakers list by **Monday 14 June 2021**.

1. *Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations, H.E. María del Carmen Squeff*
2. *Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Pramila Patten*
3. *Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Virginia Gamba*

***Special Guests:***

*Moderator: Chief of Staff, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mr. Tonderai Chikuhwa*

4. *Statement from the First Lady of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Global Champion for the Fight against Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Denise Nyakeru Tshisekedi*
5. *Statement from a contributor to the Digital Book*
6. *Statement from the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Dr. Natalia Kanem, on behalf of the UN Action network*
7. *Brief interventions from Member States and Regional Groups, including co-sponsors of General Assembly Resolution 69/293*
8. *Brief intervention from civil society / Statement from the Executive Director of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Kaavya Asoka*

*The Moderator closes the event.*

***Expected outcomes:***

1. *Statements by special guests, Member States and senior United Nations officials will reflect on the integration of risk-mitigation and response measures for CRSV survivors in COVID-19 recovery plans;*
2. *Member States will reiterate their commitment to a survivor-centred approach to the prevention and response to CRSV in the evolving context of COVID-19 response and recovery and provide updates on their political and financial support to the CRSV mandate;*
3. *Media coverage, including promotion of key messages on social media (#EndRapeinWar) and a dedicated microsite hosted by the United Nations Department of Global Communications featuring the Secretary-General's annual message and other relevant resources: <https://bit.ly/2RI03oJ>*

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