



## OPEN ARRIA FORMULA MEETING ON

### Protecting Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones

#### Concept Note

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the UN, in partnership with the Permanent Missions of Bolivia, France and Germany will organize an Arria formula meeting on the plight and rights of children born of wartime sexual violence. The objective of the meeting is to learn from past conflicts about the challenges faced by children born of war, as well as measures that have been taken to support their social integration and legal status, with a view to applying lessons learned to current conflict and post-conflict situations, and to reflect on the role of the Security Council and the wider United Nations system in this regard.

**Date: October 26<sup>th</sup> 2018**

**Time: 10 AM**

**Venue: ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York**

**Participation:** All UN Member States, Permanent Observers and non-governmental organizations are invited to attend.

Speaking possibilities for UN Security Council members and other interested delegations, time permitting. Participants are encouraged to limit their interventions to 3 minutes.

#### 1. Background

Sexual violence is endemic in conflict-affected areas, and children are often born as a result of widespread rape, sexual slavery, forced impregnation and forced marriage. They are deeply affected by the social upheavals that brought about their conception, as well as by the isolation and ostracism they suffer on the basis of their biological origins in societies polarized by war. Moreover, their voices have been silenced in policy discussions on post-conflict recovery, peacebuilding and transitional justice, and their rights and needs remain understudied by researchers. As a consequence, they have never received adequate attention from the international community, including the Security Council, though their situation has implications for social cohesion and the restoration of peace and stability.

Children born of rape are often rejected by their families and communities, stigmatized for being both “illegitimate” and “children of the enemy”. Their human rights risk being violated in a number of ways, including through abuse or neglect by immediate and extended family members, as well as stigma and reprisals by the broader community, and non-recognition by the State. Furthermore, they may face specific health risks due to the circumstances of their birth, and the psychosocial trauma suffered by their mothers may adversely affect their early childhood development. Moreover, in political contexts where nationality and citizenship rights are determined according to ethnicity or patrilineal descent, children born of sexual violence may become undocumented and stateless, and thus relegated to a legal limbo. The ensuing poverty, homelessness, and limited access to education and healthcare also have devastating and long-lasting repercussions. In countries where children inherit land and property from their fathers according to paternal lineage, children born of war may



be cut off from not only important economic resources, but also from a sense of social rootedness, identity and belonging.

Their plight is further compounded by the fact that children born of wartime sexual violence are often viewed as a threat to security and as “guilty by association” due to their father’s affiliation with an armed, violent extremist or terrorist group. Rather than being recognized as an acutely vulnerable category of victims in need of support, they are often negatively associated with the perpetrator group. Children living on the margins of society, due to being orphaned, abandoned or stigmatized, are not only deprived of fundamental human rights, but are also more susceptible to recruitment, radicalization, trafficking, and exploitation, with wider implications for national and regional peace and security. In this way, the cycle of violence can continue across generations. Indeed, by avoiding the subject of children resulting from wartime rape, countries may fail to heal antagonisms that can be markers of future social division and relapse into conflict.

## **2. Lessons learned**

Throughout history, women have been targeted for sexual violence as the perceived custodians and propagators of ethnic and cultural identity, while children have been targeted in times of war due to being seen as the future of their group. While rape is primarily an assault on an individual, its harm is also intended to shred the fabric of families and societies. Though legal, policy and programmatic responses have been slow to address these tactics of war and terror, some groundbreaking measures have been taken in the context of contemporary armed conflicts. This discussion will aim to identify promising practices, lessons learned and potential solutions to the challenges facing children born of sexual violence and their mothers, in particular social stigmatization, economic and political exclusion, and ongoing insecurity.

The historical perspective will include the case of Colombia: the only country in which children conceived through rape are legally recognized as victims and entitled to justice, reparations and redress. Another example is Bosnia and Herzegovina where religious leaders from different faiths came together to condemn the stigmatization of children born as a result of wartime sexual violence and to call for social solidarity with these children and their mothers. We will also look at the case of Uganda, where efforts have been made to find the relatives of children born of war, in order to rescue them from shame and exile, and reunite them with extended their families as part of community reintegration. Work has also been done in Uganda to scope out the challenges facing children born of war and to identify how barriers to securing birth registration and national ID cards can be overcome.

## **3. Objectives of the Arria formula meeting**

The discussion will enable the participants:

- To recognize the scale of the phenomenon of children born of wartime sexual violence, as well as the implications of this phenomenon for peace, security and inclusive development, and to raise awareness of their plight and rights;



- To take stock of and disseminate good practices and lessons learned, in order to apply them to current conflict and post-conflict situations affected by widespread sexual violence;
- To reflect on the role of the Security Council in addressing the plight of children born of sexual violence as part of efforts to maintain and restore peace and security.

#### **4. Format and briefers:**

Following introductory remarks by the Chair of the meeting, H.E. Ms. Joanna Wronecka, Permanent Representative of Poland to the UN, the following briefers will intervene:

- H.E. Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict;
- H.E. Mr. Omar Abdi, Deputy Executive of UNICEF;
- H.E. Mr. Mohammed Hussein Mohammed Bahr Al Uloom, Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nation;
- H.E. Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nation;
- Ms. Evelyn Amony, Cofounder and Chairperson of the Women's Advocacy Network, Uganda;
- Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas, Human Rights and International Working Group of Proceso de Comunidades Negras;
- Ms. Betty Sunday Ben Kute, Coordinator of Women Monthly Forum, South Sudan (VTC)

The floor will then be opened for questions and statements by Security Council members to be followed by other interested delegations and attendees. These countries can indicate their interest by sending an email to [bogna.ruminowicz@msz.gov.pl](mailto:bogna.ruminowicz@msz.gov.pl).