



Event to commemorate the 8th 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

“Prevention as Protection: Enhancing structural and operational prevention of conflict-related sexual violence”

Trusteeship Council Chamber, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. EST

Friday, 17 June 2022 – Live webcast available at: <http://webtv.un.org/>

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

Since 2008, significant progress has been made in enhancing global recognition of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) as a self-standing threat to collective security, an impediment to the restoration of peace, and a barrier to the realization of human rights and sustainable development. As such, it demands an operational security response, including survivor-centered protection, assistance, and accountability measures. Converting age-old cultures of impunity into cultures of deterrence requires consistent, visible, timely, and effective prosecution as a form of prevention. Yet, sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism, a tool of political repression and reprisal, and a driver of forced displacement, continues to be met with staggering rates of impunity and recidivism. This breeds further cycles of violence, which fracture social cohesion, and hinder reconciliation. It is therefore essential to move beyond reactive approaches, and redouble our efforts to prevent these crimes from occurring in the first place. This includes structural prevention strategies to address the underlying root causes and invisible drivers of sexual violence, such as gender-based discrimination, inequality, and exclusion, as well as harmful social norms related to honor, shame, victim-blame, and male dominance. It also includes operational prevention measures, such as tracking early-warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence and other grave violations, and translating them into early response interventions, and fostering the resilience of individuals and communities at risk to withstand economic and security shocks. Strategic engagement with State and non-State actors to ensure compliance with international norms and standards, including the adoption of precautionary and preventive measures in line with International Humanitarian Law, to spare civilian populations and their property from attack, is key to preventing the occurrence and recurrence of these grave crimes.

Through a series of robust resolutions, namely 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2331 (2016), and 2467 (2019), as well as resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1882 (2009) on rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, the Security Council has condemned all forms of conflict-related sexual violence. The promise expressed by the Council in these resolutions is prevention. They represent a commitment to bring all tools to bear, in order to save succeeding generations from this scourge. They articulate the elements of an accountability regime to influence the conduct of perpetrators, and potential perpetrators. Prevention efforts, accountability measures, and protective legal frameworks are important signifiers of compliance with Security Council directives, yet the measures prescribed remain inadequately disseminated, respected, implemented, and enforced. Acts of conflict-related sexual violence are not isolated incidents, and do not occur in a vacuum. Today, we know more than ever before about the security dynamics that give rise to these crimes, namely: mass population displacement, collapsed rule of law, the oppression and marginalization of vulnerable groups, decimated infrastructure and institutions, rising violent extremism, militarization, and hostilities waged in proximity to civilian population centers. We know the contexts in which sexual violence is concentrated, namely in displacement, within armed forces or armed groups, in detention, at checkpoints, on military bases, on the way to and from schools, and in rural and remote areas where women undertake essential livelihood activities. We also know that socioeconomically marginalized women and girls, living in insecure areas beyond the reach of rule of law institutions, are at greatest risk. Across the globe, the emboldening effects of impunity are everywhere in evidence, and it is starkly apparent that lawlessness is tantamount to “license to rape”.

Indeed, every new wave of warfare brings with it a rising tide of human tragedy, including new waves of war’s oldest, most silenced, and least-condemned crime. Today, there are multiple country contexts affected by these crimes. New crises have multiplied, even as entrenched wars march on. Limited humanitarian access has prevented survivors from receiving lifesaving services in many settings, including healthcare and psychosocial support. Compounding this situation are reports of sexual exploitation due to the scarcity of cash, food, fuel, and other essential items. Even where services are available, accessing them may place survivors at risk of victim-blaming, rejection and ostracization by families and communities. The risk of reprisals may make it untenable for survivors to attempt to escape from, or to report, their attackers. In addition, enhanced risk mitigation measures are required to prevent conflict-driven trafficking, which increases as greater numbers of civilians, notably women and children, are displaced, and as access to services and livelihoods becomes more precarious.

The current environment provides an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which Security Council resolutions, based on international humanitarian, criminal, and human rights law, and the accountability mechanisms linked to them, are effective, and how we can work collectively to reinforce and sustainably support the international architecture that has been established since 2009. This architecture includes the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which works to strengthen institutional safeguards against impunity, and to build the technical capacity of police, prosecutors, and the judiciary at the national-level; the interagency coordination network, UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, chaired by the SRSG-SVC; and Women’s Protection Advisers, whose timely deployment to the field is vital for real-time monitoring, reporting, and response. We must marshal a level of political resolve and financial resources commensurate with the scale and complexity of the challenge, including by replenishing the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Multi-Partner Trust Fund (CRSV MPTF), which supports this work.

The latest annual *Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence* (S/2022/272), compiled by the Office of the SRSG-SVC, sets out a roadmap for multistakeholder action to prevent this scourge, including: coordinated political and diplomatic engagement upstream to ensure that

sexual violence is addressed in ceasefire and peace agreements, recognizing that no agreement can be comprehensive if the gunfire ceases, but the weapon of rape continues unchecked; integrating early-warning indicators of sexual violence into threat analysis and risk assessments from the outset of any crisis, including “red flag factors” such as misogynistic political rhetoric, house raids and searches, abductions, and changes in the mobility patterns of women and girls, in order to trigger targeted response interventions; leveraging the credible threat of sanctions to curtail the flow of arms and resources to perpetrators, potential perpetrators, and spoilers to the peace, in order to incentivize compliance and corrective action; gender-responsive justice and security sector reform, including through vetting, training, civilian oversight, codes of conduct, the issuance of clear orders through military chains of command that reinforce policies of zero-tolerance for sexual violence, and enhanced gender balance among security sector personnel; amplifying the voices of survivors and affected communities in decision-making processes; and safeguarding human rights defenders, victims, witnesses, and journalists, and fostering a safe environment that enables civil society organizations to operate in proximity to communities that are in need and at risk. The central insight of this report is the need to foster a protective environment that inhibits sexual violence in the first instance, and enables safe reporting and response.

As Secretary-General Guterres has stated: “*When we talk about war crimes, we cannot forget that the worst of crimes is war itself*”. The current context of great global turbulence makes it abundantly clear that no amount of protection or assistance is a substitute for peace. It is critical to reinforce compliance, publicly denounce transgressions, and mitigate the ever-rising risk of intimidation and reprisals against frontline actors and activists who put their lives on the line to address these crimes. Prevention is the best form of protection, including the prevention of conflict itself, through the concerted and proactive waging of inclusive, just, and durable peace.

In line with the General Assembly Resolution of 2015 (A/RES/69/293), an 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 unanimous adoption of the first Security Council resolution to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war and a 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, to ensure they are not forgotten in a climate of intersecting crises, pandemic recovery, and constrained resources.

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

The event will consist of opening remarks by the three co-hosts, followed by a short video showcasing the field work of one of the member entities of the UN Action network. The Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, will deliver a statement, which will be followed by remarks by a leading Afghan politician and women's rights activist. In addition, a new *Framework for the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, developed through consultations across the UN Action network, will be launched during the event. The coordinated work of the United Nations in “delivering as one” in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence will be presented by ASG Gillian Triggs of UNHCR, an active member of the UN Action network, which is chaired by the SRSG-SVC. To conclude, representatives of Member States, Regional Groups, and Civil Society will be invited to make brief interventions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</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 **Wednesday 15 June 2022**.

***Opening Segment:***

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

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. *Short video from a situation affected by conflict-related sexual violence from the field (tbc)*
5. *Statement from the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Ms. Siobhán Mullally*
6. *Statement from the first woman Deputy Speaker of Parliament in Afghanistan, Ms. Fawzia Koofi*
7. *Statement from Assistant Secretary-General of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Gillian Triggs, on behalf of the UN Action network*
8. *Brief interventions from Member States and Regional Groups, including co-sponsors of General Assembly Resolution 69/293*
9. *Statement from the Executive Director of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Kaavya Asoka (tbc)*

*Moderator closes the event.*

***Expected outcomes:***

1. *Statements by the panellists, Member States, and senior United Nations officials, as informed by the perspectives of survivors and civil society representatives, will highlight ways to improve and expand interventions to prevent CRSV and reduce the risk of sexual violence in fragile, conflict-affected, and post-conflict settings.*
2. *Member States will reiterate their commitment to translating the concept of CRSV prevention into practical reality that can be implemented at the local, national, and regional levels, including through adequate, flexible, and sustainable resourcing to the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Multi-Partner Trust Fund (CRSV MPTF).*
3. *Enhanced media coverage globally, including the 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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