



United Nations Security Council Open Debate

Women, Peace and Security: Preventing conflict-related sexual violence through demilitarisation and gender-responsive arms control

23 April 2024, 10:00am

Concept Note

I Background

Resolution 1325 (2000) called for all parties to armed conflict to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, including rape and other forms of sexual abuse. In resolution 1820 (2008), the Council resolved to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)¹ and end amnesty and impunity for those crimes. The normative framework for the Security Council's actions to respond to sexual violence continued to evolve through resolutions 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2331 (2016), and 2467 (2019).

The annual open debate on CRSV provides an opportunity for Member States to reflect on emerging themes associated with the systematic use of sexual violence by state and non-state actors as a tactic of war, torture, and terrorism in armed conflicts. This year the debate on CRSV will focus on preventing CRSV through demilitarisation and gender-responsive armed control. It will aim to identify opportunities for cross-leveraging arms control and disarmament treaties, instruments, and frameworks to more effectively prevent CRSV, and to increase women's leadership and influence in formulating policy and decision-making in this field.

Drawing from the UN Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace and Council actions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the Open Debate seeks to identify avenues for harmonising strategies to advance the WPS and disarmament agendas in support of CRSV prevention and response. This focus builds on the analysis reflected in the recent annual Reports of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

Militarisation and arms proliferation increases CRSV

CRSV is a central concept to consider in the context of the political economy of war as the proliferation of arms and the illicit trafficking of weapons increases the use of sexual violence by armed groups, organised crime, and terrorist groups. Furthermore, they may generate revenue through the kidnapping of women and children for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

¹ The term 'conflict-related sexual violence' (CRSV) refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, trafficking in persons when committed in situations of conflict for the purpose of sexual violence/exploitation and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls, or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.



UNIDIR estimates that between 70-90% of CRSV incidents involve weapons and firearms, which are used to intimidate, threaten, coerce, injure, and kill civilians with rape, gang rape, abduction, early and forced marriages, and other forms of sexual violence. The proliferation of weapons, including those diverted from legal trade, also enables attacks on human rights defenders and peacebuilders, and negatively impacts women's and girls' security, mobility, education, and economic opportunities in post-conflict environments.

Preventing use of CRSV through demilitarisation, disarmament, and arms controls

Article 26 of the UN Charter recognises the need to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion of the world's economic and human resources to arms. Similarly, the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace calls for reduced military spending and actions to reduce the impact of weapons on gender inequality. The Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament further recognises that the proliferation, diversion, and misuse of arms can enable terrorist acts, human rights abuses, and gender-based violence.

Robust and effective arms regulation, which is required by the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, can strengthen CRSV prevention. Gender-responsive arms control and disarmament reduces the proliferation of weapons that facilitate CRSV and creates a more conducive environment for peacebuilding.

The newly adopted 2023 Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management calls for mainstreaming a gender perspective in related policies and practices, and for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in these processes. The UN Programme of Action to Prevent and Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (UNPoA) recommends gender and age-related assessments and data collection on the impacts of the illicit trade of SALW, and in corresponding policies and programmes. The Arms Trade Treaty requires States parties to assess the risk that arms exports could be used to commit acts of sexual and gender-based violence.

Moreover, the Security Council applies targeted arms embargoes to 1267 Committee designated terrorist groups or networks, and to State or non-state armed groups which are listed as credibly suspected perpetrators of CRSV. The Council has included sexual violence as a designation criterion in relevant sanctions regimes.

Furthermore, by aligning WPS and Small Arms Control National Action Plans, and by systematically collecting and sharing sex and age disaggregated data, Member States can strengthen the gender responsiveness of national arms control policies and legislation.

Ensuring women's full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation in arms control and disarmament fora

Despite the disproportionate and unique gendered impacts of weapons, women constitute fewer than one-third of participants in multilateral disarmament meetings. In Resolution 2122 (2013), the Security Council called for women's full and meaningful participation in arms control in all levels of decision making and, in Resolution 2242 (2015), encouraged their participation in the design and implementation of such efforts. These aims can be advanced by supporting survivors and survivor groups, civil society, and women's organisations to leverage arms control and disarmament measures for CRSV prevention, including through capacity strengthening and risk mitigation.



Addressing CRSV in peace processes and operations

CRSV must be considered at the outset of peace processes and mediation efforts, and in Security Council mandates authorising or renewing peace operations and political missions. Resolutions 1888 (2009) and 2467 (2019) specify the deployment of Gender Advisers and Women Protection Advisers as a critical implementation mechanism for the CRSV mandate.

In Resolutions 2616 (2021), 2220 (2015), and 1820 (2008), the Security Council identified opportunities for cross leveraging CRSV and arms control efforts in the context of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) and post-conflict security arrangements. They call for engaging with women and women-led organisations, establishing CRSV protection mechanisms in and around cantonment sites and communities of return, and by ensuring that women and girls formerly associated with armed groups can access reintegration resources.

The links between CRSV and weapons can also be addressed in the context of policing, early warning systems, intelligence collection and conflict management.

Addressing the root causes of CRSV

Addressing the gendered root causes of violence and militarisation is essential for advancing gender responsive arms control and disarmament, and for reducing the proliferation of weapons that facilitate CRSV. Weapons ownership and use are closely related to harmful gender norms and attitudes which can exacerbate gender-based discrimination. CRSV prevention must therefore reflect both an understanding about the factors shaping the victimisation of women and girls, and support for increasing their agency and leadership in disarmament and arms control policies and processes.

II Guiding questions

- How can the Security Council and other regional bodies improve CRSV prevention by cross-leveraging disarmament frameworks, UN mechanisms and tools, including in the context of the upcoming 4th Review Conference on the UN PoA?
- How can the UN sustain SSR/DDR investments during transitions and mission drawdowns to ensure the protection of civilians from CRSV and to prevent recurrence?
- How can Member States reduce the risk that arms transfers and illicit weapons are used to commit CRSV, including by supporting women's decision making in disarmament fora?
- How can Member states better harmonise national strategies for implementing WPS and disarmament agendas to strengthen CRSV prevention and response?
- How can the UN Security Council improve information-sharing and dissemination of good practices regarding CRSV prevention and SALW non-proliferation efforts?



III Format, briefers, and participation

The open debate will be chaired by the Hon Dr Christopher Fearne, Deputy Prime Minister of Malta. The following speakers will brief:

- Ms Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
- Civil society briefer
- Ms Danai Gurira, UN Women Goodwill Ambassador

Member States wishing to participate in-person should inscribe their names on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE+. A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires, a.i., requesting to participate in accordance with Rule 37 of the Council's Provisional Rules of Procedure must be uploaded to the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE+. Inscription for said meeting will open on **Friday, 19 April 2024, at 09:30 a.m.**

To guarantee the participation of as many delegations as possible, statements should not exceed three minutes.