



PERMANENT MISSION OF HUNGARY

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

*“Preventing Sexual Violence Crimes through
Justice and Deterrence”*

20 June 2017

Intervention by

H.E. Ambassador Katalin Annamária Bogyay

Permanent Representative

Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Hungary aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. Let me first commend the organizers for convening today's event on this very timely topic. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Under-Secretary-General Ms. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for their outstanding work.

Hungary condemns the widespread and growing use of sexual violence in armed conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism. Sexual violence is often used as a multi-faceted strategy to terrorize populations, displace communities, and to humiliate women, children and men.

Rape is a powerful weapon; perpetrators purposefully use it to demolish the cornerstone of societies. Sexual violence not only destroys the victim's health and human dignity, in most cases for the rest of their lives, but also breaks down families and shatters society.

To fight the perpetrators' multi-faceted strategy, we must act together, and take a holistic approach to the problem. There must be effective cooperation among states, international organizations, civil society, and religious and business groups.

Hungary attaches especially great importance to the protection of women and children. We support international initiatives aimed at combating sexual violence in conflicts, and have contributed to UN projects for the elimination of all forms of such crimes.

Setting up effective accountability mechanisms are vital in the prevention of conflict related sexual violence. This is why Hungary provided a voluntary contribution for a joint UN Women and Justice Rapid Response project aimed at securing accountability for sexual and gender-based crimes.

These crimes must be prosecuted and punished under national and international law. Regrettably, up to now, impunity for perpetrators continues to be a major challenge. We need to strengthen the capacity of national institutions critical to ensuring accountability for past crimes, as well as prevention and deterrence for the future. We support the efforts of the UN Team of Experts on

the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence, which assists national authorities in their criminal investigation and prosecutions, the collection and preservation of evidence, and criminal law reform.

Ending the culture of impunity would contribute mightily to conflict prevention and sustaining peace on national and international levels. Ensuring accountability for serious crimes not only helps us to render justice for the victims of atrocities, but also to bring about reconciliation, promote human rights and build resilient societies. We welcome the establishment of an international, impartial and independent mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of the most serious crimes committed in Syria.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sexual violence remains chronically underreported as a result of fear and stigmatization. Stigmas are not only insufferable for women, but also dangerous to society, strengthening and conserving the preconception that the victims of violence, and in cases the child born thereof, are to be blamed and shamed, and create an atmosphere where perpetrators are invisible, and seldom held accountable.

We must end silence. As long as rape remains invisible and shameful, recovery is impossible, and the recurrence of such crimes is inevitable. Stigmas can kill, not only by untreated infections and injuries of the victims, but by lethal retaliation such as honor crimes, suicide, and unsafe abortion.

The focus of our attention must be to empower victims. We need to strengthen reporting mechanisms on sexual violence we have to make sure that all and any allegations of sexual violence are investigated and prosecuted. For that, we need to make sure that witnesses are protected and evidence is collected. Finally, we have to help survivors to start their lives over.

Distinguished colleagues,

The effect of sexual violence has a long-term effect on the victims themselves, but also on community life and economic consequences. One of the most critical challenges is the common experience of economic exclusion suffered by victims and survivors. We need to develop integrated, gender-sensitive strategies and program interventions to prevent this from happening in the future.

We need to ensure comprehensive victim-centered cost-free services to victims of all forms of sexual violence and children who born of violence, including physical treatment and physiological care.

Beyond the protection of women against violence, we have to work to empowering women in all educational, economic, financial, judicial and social processes. Women's economic power and social status must be strengthened by providing access to education and skills development training, and by providing assistance to income- generating and other economic activities.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Secretary-General Antonio Guterres so rightly pointed out, *“sexual violence is a brutal form of physical and physiological warfare rooted in the gender inequality extant not only in zones of conflict but in our everyday lives.”*

In addition to combatting sexual violence against women, the general empowerment of women and girls, and the promotion of gender equality, are also cornerstones of the Hungarian agenda. We believe in the importance of increasing women's meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making.

Eliminating sexual violence in conflict and creating safe environments can only be achieved by addressing gender inequality and discrimination. Vulnerability to becoming a victim of such egregious crimes starts long before conflict strikes. It stems from inequality in society.

We are confident that effective involvement of women into every stage of peace processes is an essential tool to address the phenomenon of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict.

Raising awareness both at the national and global levels is crucial. In this respect, the media, the advocacy groups and civil society in general can also contribute significantly.

Raising awareness, exchanging best practices, and institutionalizing memory may go a long way in preventing future atrocities. Education, research, and data collection on sexual violence may contribute to prevention of future crimes.

Hungary is an active contributor to initiatives combatting sexual violence in conflict. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is organizing an awareness-raising workshop this summer on Women, Peace and Security for experts of the relevant ministries, army and police, peacekeeping personnel, and interested civil society organizations and academics. Sexual violence in armed conflicts will be one of the topics discussed.

For these reasons, it is of utmost importance that we continue this dialogue on this important topic, and keep fighting. Hungary will continue to play an active role and it is great to see that more and more States are ready to join this important fight.

Thank you for your attention!