



Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on

Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallström

Informal consultations of the Security Council on Protection of Civilians

(18 February 2011)

Madame President, Members of the Security Council,

I wish to thank the Government of Brazil for organizing these important consultations.

Against the historical backdrop of sexual violence having been *war's oldest, most silenced and least condemned crime*, the last three years have seen a momentous increase in attention and action to address it. The Security Council has been at the cutting edge of this progress. The Council's adoption of resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960 have challenged long-standing myths that sexual violence is cultural, private, inevitable, or simply the random acts of a few renegades. We have witnessed the expansion of the circle of stakeholders beyond gender experts to also engage uniformed peacekeepers, mediators, ceasefire monitors, war crimes prosecutors, and the full range of civilian protection actors.

Since 1999, the commitment of the Council on protection issues has translated into increasingly precise operational requirements expressed in both thematic and country-specific resolutions. The recognition that sexual violence can constitute a legitimate threat to security, requiring a security response, represents a dramatic paradigm shift.

The latest development, resolution 1960, adds stronger tools and sharper "teeth". It puts in place the elements of a compliance system, through which perpetrators will be answerable. Implementation of this architecture will require concerted efforts that move the system from *reactive* to *proactive* mode. For instance, the credible threat of sanctions will compel potential perpetrators to make concrete protection commitments.

My Office will focus in particular on implementing the four key elements of the compliance regime established under 1960:

- i) Establishing monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements in situations of concern;
- ii) Listing parties credibly suspected of committing patterns of sexual violence;

- iii) Initiating dialogue with parties to conflict to elicit commitments to prevent sexual violence and hold perpetrators to account; and
- iv) Channeling increasingly precise and actionable information to Sanctions Committees.

One thing is clear: we are as strong as our partnerships. We cannot do it alone. At a time of global financial constraints, and increasing demands on field operations, the UN system is challenged to make pragmatic decisions about how to bring together priorities that coincide substantively and operationally. At the same time, it is important to reinforce areas of focused practice where tangible protection gains are being made. At all times, the lines of communication must be as open as they are in this room today.

To implement the ambitious agenda articulated in successive Security Council resolutions will require a range of strategic partnerships. We have enhanced system-wide coordination through Comprehensive Strategies to Combat Sexual Violence at the national level, to scale-up services for survivors and work jointly with governments. We are collaborating with DPKO and UN Women to provide scenario-based pre-deployment training on the “how-to” of sexual violence prevention and response to Troop Contributing Countries. This should be considered part of their overall operational readiness to fulfill Protection of Civilians mandates, and indeed will be one part of the broader DPKO training modules on the Protection of Civilians. We have begun to capture and share examples of successful interventions, to ensure *best practice* becomes *standard practice*. My Office, in partnership with UN Women, DPKO and others, will develop an early-warning matrix of risk factors to draw attention to the “red flags” that may signal a spike in sexual violence. We have also worked closely with OHCHR, UNDP and DPKO to activate the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law.

We all recognize that effective action, whether it is robust military interventions to protect civilians or programmes that are timely and relevant, depends on reliable information and analysis. Therefore, one of the main priorities common to all protection agendas is to establish systems to better monitor and report on violations and risks. In this regard, my Office is also consulting closely with the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict. Women Protection Advisers will have an important role to play in the new monitoring system. Consultations with DPKO are ongoing about where they would be most strategically situated in missions. Guidance on the new arrangements will be issued to the field by April 2011.

The Secretary-General’s December report defined – for the first time – the concept of “conflict-related sexual violence”. To ensure coherence and unity of purpose, it has been critical to agree on this common analytical framing and to speak with one voice. A more detailed guidance note is also being prepared in this regard, in consultation with all partners.

Simply stated, the aim is to break the vicious cycle of sexual violence being overlooked in peacetalks, reparations schemes, and funding frameworks for recovery because it did not feature in any official report.

UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, a network of 13 UN entities that I Chair, will continue to serve as the primary UN system consultation forum to inform policy and programming. This is a robust coordination infrastructure. The specific focus on conflict-related sexual violence since 2007 has been the key to moving this issue from the shadows of history into the spotlight of international scrutiny.

In protection terms, progress on any one agenda, be it Women, Peace and Security, Children and Armed Conflict, or Sexual Violence in Conflict, is a tide that lifts all boats. Each agenda is one piece of a larger mosaic and we must be mindful not only of our specific institutional aims, but of the ripple effects into other areas. Successful practice in any area provides a source of inspiration and a precedent on which to build. I am convinced that only through collective and concerted action will we eradicate the scourge of sexual violence, and realize the promise of *all* the Council's bold thematic resolutions.