

# Speech: Justice and care for survivors of sexual violence in conflict

Mr President, Your Excellencies, colleagues, friends. May I firstly extend my heartfelt thanks to Germany, and to you Mr President in particular, for your personal efforts in prioritising discussion on this important issue. The important issue in front of us today: a discussion on conflict related sexual violence, and for gathering such knowledgeable briefers. But I am sure I speak for everyone in this chamber and beyond that our biggest thanks are to our briefers. In particular to those courageous survivors of sexual violence in conflict. Once again Mr President, we have heard compelling testimony that despite considerable momentum that has been built on this very issue since the adoption of Security Council Resolutions 2106 and indeed others. And the launch of the United Kingdom-led preventing sexual violence conflict over seven years ago. There is still so much more to do. And the proposed resolution before us today is a positive contribution to much needed efforts to move the agenda forward. The United Kingdom is supporting the proposed resolution – proposed by Germany – today. Because time after time in this very chamber, as we have heard today, we have heard shocking reports of conflict related sexual violence. And I am sure I speak for everyone in this chamber that we pay tribute to the likes of Nadia Mourad and Inas Moulud – for your brave courage and testimony that you have presented once again today. Sexual violence and the impact of these crimes, that they have on countries, on survivors, on communities, on families, is very clear and it is our responsibility as the Security Council that we respond to this challenge.

The proposed resolution builds on previous resolutions, in developing an integrated, effective, international approach to tackling this grave crime. And there are three elements that I wish to focus on in my contribution. Firstly, the proposed resolution rightly recognises the importance of focusing on survivors need, through a survivor centred approach. A point again articulated by the Secretary-General in its contribution today. We believe this is key to all policies and programmes that aim to meet the needs of survivors of conflict related sexual violence and to avoid putting them at risk of further harm. Secondly, the proposed resolution acknowledges that conflict related sexual violence has a disproportionate impact on women and girls. It encourages support for children born of sexual violence and recognises that sexual violence also affects men and boys. And the United Kingdom believes that survivors' services should cater for all survivors without exception. And welcomes the efforts made in this resolution, Mr President, to promote this very approach. And thirdly, the resolution emphasises the role that civil society plays in efforts to address conflict related sexual violence, including by tackling stigma, as well as the central role in the implementation of broader Women, Peace and Security agenda.

However, the United Kingdom believes more needs to be done. And we regret that the language on services for survivors of sexual violence – recognising the acute need for those services to include comprehensive reproductive and

sexual health care including safe termination of pregnancies – did not meet with all the Council members support. However, Mr President, it is important that we maintain efforts, our consistent efforts, in this respect and we maintain that progress that we have made on this issue including through previous Council resolutions, most notably Council Resolution 2106. Over the last several years, the United Kingdom has spent over £46 million since 2012 on preventing and responding to conflict related sexual violence around the world. And I assure you that as the United Kingdom Prime Minister's Special Representative on this very issue it is a personal priority for me. Our international consultations have informed our efforts to put survivors at the centre of our approach, not only on how we respond to incidents that have already occurred but also as we've heard from our briefers today, on how we importantly prevent them happening again.

We have been pleased to work with like-minded partners and in particular I pay tribute to the close cooperation that we have enjoyed with SRSG Patten and her office, indeed joint visits as we made not so long ago to Iraq. Accountability is key to both response and prevention. First because achieving justice, as we've heard today again is a vital step in helping survivors to repair and rebuild their lives. And secondly because ending impunity, as we heard from Amal Clooney, is an essential deterrent against future violence of this nature. And that is why the United Kingdom is committed to strengthening justice for survivors and holding perpetrators to account. Mr President, this not only means ensuring that international standards and best practices on gathering evidence are upheld, so convictions can be secured., it also means ensuring that survivors are not traumatised all over again. That is why we need to tackle conscious and unconscious bias within criminal justice systems and build the capacity of judges and prosecutors to gain a better understanding to conflict related sexual violence. A priority as illustrated by the testimonies we've heard today from Nadia Mourad and the need to act. We owe it to the survivors. It is therefore why the UK is working with the Institute of International Criminal Investigation and Nadia Murad's Initiative to develop the Murad code. This ethical code of conduct will ensure that survivors give informed consent regarding evidence gathering and that they are referred to support services safely and confidentially.

We want to see the code incorporated into all donor funding requirements and hope that all members will sign up when we launch this code formally at our PSVI international conference scheduled in London in November of this year. However, we should also recognise that for some survivors achieving justice does not necessarily mean going through the formal court system. Which is why we support the Mukwege Foundation and Nadia Murad's Initiative in developing community focus redress for survivors. The UK has recently funded the pilot project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in this respect. Mr President, we also support Dr Mukwege's plea for a more holistic support for survivors. We therefore endorse the call for Council members to provide more funding to the survivor advocate networks, healthcare professionals and psychosocial services that offer such support – and are making a real difference in the life of survivors on the ground. Mr President, I was going to end my contribution today with a question to the briefers: on how we the

international community can do more to ensure that survivors of sexual violence have access to this holistic support? Yet through their testimonies, we have heard many of the answers today. I would say, in particular, to the testimonies we heard from the survivors and that of Amal Clooney.

And thanking you for providing insights today, let me assure you we will reflect on the contributions you have made. And in doing so I feel proud of the United Kingdom's contribution in first of all in penning and securing unanimous support for Security Council resolutions, which ensured that we held those ISIS perpetrators of these crimes to account. And we stand with the Government of Iraq, we stand with the survivors, we stand with Nadia Murad and others who represent them, such as Amal Clooney. And we support totally the works and efforts of Special Advisor Karim Khan and his team on the ground in Iraq. Mr President, we look forward to their responses, their continued insights, their continued expertise. And most importantly the testimonies of survivors. We should all remain focused on this key priority. It should be the basis of international action in Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. As we've heard today. Words, yes, are important but words alone do not provide justice and accountability for survivors. It is time to act. And we must do just that.

Thank you.