

**OPEN DEBATE ON CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**Statement of**  
**The Kingdom of the Netherlands**

**April 13, 2022**

**New York**

**TO BE CHECKED FOR DELIVERY**

Mr. President,

I would like to thank the UK for organizing today's important debate. I especially thank today's civil society briefers for the indispensable work they do.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statements of the EU, the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the LGBTI Core Group.

We strongly support the mandate and the work of the SRSG for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten.

Mr. President,

Despite the UN Secretary General's Call for a Global Ceasefire two years ago, the world has seen protracted conflicts intensify and new crises unfold. The unjustified invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine is another example of grave violations of international law, including the UN Charter. We are appalled by testimonies of sexual violence perpetrated by Russian armed forces against Ukrainian women and girls. These crimes can and will not go unpunished.

To strengthen accountability for sexual violence in conflict and contribute to its prevention, we must do more. Allow me to highlight three key areas where action is needed:

**First**, survivors' leadership is an essential part of the survivor-centred approach. In responding to sexual violence, the diverse voices and needs of survivors should be prioritized, and their access to essential services and sexual and reproductive health and rights and mental health should be ensured. Survivors' voices are key prerequisites for enhancing access to justice and accountability. Best practices with the survivor-centred approach from our own programmes include setting up dialogues with survivors and local power-holders to address the root causes of sexual violence.

**Second**, we need to keep investing in civil society as key enablers of democracy and the rule of law. Across the globe, we see cases where civic space is restricted, where women human rights defenders are attacked or even murdered. In

contexts such as South Sudan, Libya, Myanmar and Yemen, this puts their vital role in monitoring and responding to sexual violence in conflict at risk.

Through dedicated WPS programmes and financial support to the NGO Working Group on WPS, the Kingdom of the Netherlands contributes to strengthening civil society. However, we all should do more for example by implementing recommendations by Women Human Rights Defenders on how diplomatic missions can protect them and ensure access to flexible funding.

**Third**, we also need to strengthen mechanisms for holding those who perpetrate sexual violence accountable, both at the national and international level.

Impunity perpetuates conflict-related sexual violence. We therefore call upon national authorities to strengthen the rule of law for prosecuting sexual and gender based violence. Too often, these crimes are dealt with by local mediation mechanisms, lacking appropriate tools and capacity to address these cases and provide survivor-centred referral.

Only when serious investments are made providing survivors access to justice and in holding perpetrators to account, accountability may function as a method of prevention.

Mr. President,

Please rest assured that the Kingdom of the Netherlands is and will always be a strong supporter to efforts to prevent and eliminate sexual violence in conflict.

Thank you.