

**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*

**Benelux intervention  
Deputy Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, Ms. Anne Dostert**

Mrs. President,

I would like to thank Malta for organizing this critical debate.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Benelux countries, Belgium, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and my own country, Luxembourg. We align ourselves with the statements of the EU, the Group of Friends of WPS, and the LGBTI Core Group.

We thank SRSG Patten for her briefing and reiterate our full support to the mandate of her office. Allow me to extend special gratitude to today's civil society briefers for their indispensable work.

Mrs. President,

Despite the existing normative framework on conflict-related sexual violence, this year's SG report once again describes a worrying surge of incidents of CRSV across the world.

Against the backdrop of these trends, **it is key to focus on how we can prevent occurrences of sexual violence related to conflicts**. Please allow me to highlight three areas for action:

Firstly, to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence, we need to address its **root causes**. CRSV often arises in contexts marked by power asymmetry, patriarchy and impunity. Arms proliferation and illicit trade of small arms and light weapons are factors that aggravate CRSV. Prevention strategies must tackle all these root causes, taking into account the interlinkages between militarization and gender inequality.

Secondly, **cooperation across national borders must become the norm**. In this light, we welcome the first ever **International Conference of Prosecutors on Accountability for CRSV**, which was hosted by the Netherlands last month in partnership with the Office of SRSG Patten and her Team of Experts. The meeting brought together prosecutors and legal practitioners from 32 member states to share experiences from their domestic court systems to translate commitments of this Council into concrete realities on the ground. The lessons learned from the conference will also provide valuable input to work towards a **community of practice** for CRSV prosecutors that can help to enhance implementation. As we approach the fifteenth anniversary of the United Nations mandate on sexual violence in conflict, we invite all member states to redouble efforts to ensure justice for victims and survivors of CRSV.

Thirdly, CRSV prevention can be improved by enhancing conditions for the **full, equal, and meaningful participation** of women in security sector reforms, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, including in leadership roles. Under-representation of women and historically marginalised communities in the field of new technologies, including in the arms

industry, generate bias and imbalances. The Benelux countries aim to ensure strong gender commitments in the upcoming Review Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons requires **mainstreaming a gender perspective into implementation efforts of Member States to specifically address the gendered impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons**. It is essential to adopt a concerted approach in all multilateral fora, also in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and in this Council under the Women Peace and Security Agenda (WPS).

Mrs. President,

To conclude, we wish to reiterate our strong engagement to protect global generational gains on the rights of all women and girls. We owe it to the victims and survivors to do our best to prevent and eliminate CRSV by taking concrete actions and move forward, not go backwards.

I thank you.