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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SECURITY COUNCIL - OPEN DEBATE ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

ACCOUNTABILITY AS PREVENTION: ENDING CYCLES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

STATEMENT BY MYRIAM OEHRI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, CHARGÉE D'AFFAIRES

Mr. President,

Despite a robust legal framework, including respective Security Council resolutions, sexual violence continues to occur in many conflicts, often in a systematic manner. The latest shocking examples are the mounting reports of sexual violence in apparent use as a weapon of warfare in Ukraine – one of numerous aspects of systematic violations of international humanitarian law resulting from the Russian aggression. The ongoing reports of rape and abduction in Ethiopia and Myanmar continue to be very alarming. All three situations require the urgent attention of the respective Commissions of Inquiry and accountability mechanism established by the Human Rights Council – and in the case of Ukraine, we will be looking for expeditious investigations by the International Criminal Court. We remain concerned about sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, men and boys, as well as LGBTI+ persons which is used as a weapon of war, to attack civilian populations, and to break societies, communities, and families, as also documented by the All Survivors Project in Afghanistan and Syria, among others. These acts are not only morally repugnant; they are categorically prohibited under international humanitarian and human rights law. They constitute war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity and genocide. Concrete, timebound preventive measures as explicitly outlined in Security Council resolutions 2106 and 2467 are necessary to bring an end to conflict-related sexual violence. And we reiterate our call on the Council to include conflict-related sexual violence as a designation

criterion in targeted sanctions regimes.

Mr. President,

Accountability is indeed key to addressing conflict-related sexual violence. International criminal justice mechanisms have significantly advanced our efforts to fight impunity. In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda broke new ground when it found in the Akayesu case that rape and sexual assault constitutes an act of genocide. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court has played a pioneering role in establishing a comprehensive and victim-centered framework to expansively and efficiently respond to conflict-related sexual violence crimes. For the first time in history, it firmly established conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence as crimes against humanity and war crimes. We commend the office of the Prosecutor for including charges related to sexual and gender-based crimes in many of their cases and for prioritizing these crimes as a matter of policy. The ICC's judgment against Dominic Ongwen succeeded in painting a comprehensive picture of sexual and gender-based crimes suffered by victims and constitutes important precedent for future cases.

Where the ICC does not have jurisdiction, we must look for other options. In the case of Syria, the IIM supports prosecutions for the most serious crimes under international law, offering a path towards justice for the crimes committed, including sexual violence. Its Terms of Reference note the need for dedicated expertise on sexual violence. We look forward to the publication of the IIM's gender strategy and implementation plan in the coming months.

Mr. President,

Armed conflicts and related displacement result in increased vulnerability and heighten risks of human trafficking, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This widespread phenomenon is also acknowledged in the Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence. Our collective fight against human trafficking must include leveraging the crucial role played by the financial sector in ending these crimes, as also called for in Security Council Resolution 2331. The "Liechtenstein Initiative" on Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking – or "FAST" for short – engages the financial sector to tackle these crimes, and emphasizes the role of financial inclusion

and economic empowerment as a major means to prevent vulnerability in the first place. Among many other activities, it has undertaken activities with respect to the risk of human trafficking as a result of the massive refugee flows in Ukraine, both in the area of prevention and of financial inclusion of the Ukrainian people who have come to our country as refugees due to the Russian aggression.

I thank you.