



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ITEM 28 (A, B):
ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

**STATEMENT
BY
BARBARA STEFAN,
ADVISOR
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

NEW YORK, 11 OCTOBER 2010

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman,

Statistics indicate that two out of three women worldwide experience physical violence at least once in their lifetime, most often by someone they know or even family members. I tried to find out if this number could be accurate by asking nine of my closest female friends, if they have experienced violence. The result is shocking: seven out of ten (including myself) have been victims of violence, three of them more than once. None of them is over 30 years old, and all of them come from developed countries (none of them from Liechtenstein). Amongst the violations are rape, assault, coercion and other forms of abuse. Only three of the victims reported the crimes to the police; only one of these perpetrators was brought to justice. This perpetrator was convicted to a three year suspended sentence and mandatory three month imprisonment in the case of re-offense as punishment for two incidents of physical assault, one incident of assault with coercion and one incident of coercion. This perpetrator was my ex-husband. The process culminating in the verdict took two years, including one appeal from first instance.

Mr. Chairman,

Of all the women that have suffered and are suffering at this very moment from violence, I am one of the few to have the opportunity to talk to the Third Committee, to put forward my own experience, which is shared by so many others and to raise awareness of the magnitude and consequences of gender-based violence. The numbers resulting from my personal inquiry verify another fact: only a minority of women report their cases of violence, and of those cases only a small number is brought to justice. The result is that most perpetrators enjoy impunity. However, impunity for gender-based violence sends a message to society that male violence against women is both acceptable and inevitable. As a result, patterns of violent behavior are normalized and tolerated.

Year after year adopt a resolution on intensifying efforts to eliminate violence against women; this resolution includes many elements that – if implemented – could actually help to end this appalling phenomenon. But what action is really taken? There is a huge gap between commitments and implementation, as is sadly very often the case with human rights work. Until we begin implementing our work and taking progressive action, we will just continue to talk here, year after year, without result. Meanwhile, more and more women will be victims of violence.

Mr. Chairman,

Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, harms the physical and mental health of women and violates their human rights. It also hampers productivity, reduces human capital and undermines economic growth. In societies affected by conflict, women often face devastating forms of sexual violence, such as systematic rape as a tactic of war. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the scale of

atrocities committed against women has reached horrendous heights: it is believed that four out of five women have been raped over the past five years in some towns in the eastern part of the country. Women and girls, even though they are rarely directly engaged in combat, are disproportionately impacted by the conflict that has been going on for more than 15 years. The recently released mapping report emphasizes *"the fact that the scale and gravity of sexual violence were primarily the result of the victims' lack of access to justice and the impunity that has reigned in recent decades, which has made women even more vulnerable than they already were. The phenomenon of sexual violence continues today as a result of this near-total impunity."* The report concludes that *"the capacity of the Congolese justice system to bring an end to impunity for crimes under international law is severely limited."*

The situation in the DRC was referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the country itself in March 2004. It is clear, however, that the Court will never have the capacity to deal with all crimes committed in the DRC. Efforts to strengthen the national judicial system must therefore be redoubled, in accordance with the principle of complementarity enshrined in the Rome Statute.

Mr. Chairman,

As we are approaching the 10-year anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325, we are reminded that the fight against impunity for gender-based crimes must also be an integral part of our work in the area of women, peace and security. The Rome Statute and Resolution 1325 are mutually reinforcing. Taken together, they establish a normative framework for justice, prevention, participation, relief and recovery that has the potential to change the lives of millions of women in conflict. It is now time to turn rhetoric into action and achieve a comprehensive and transparent system of implementation for the WPS agenda.

We are therefore looking forward to an action-oriented resolution on violence against women this year. The text should reflect the important role of the ICC in ending impunity and reaffirm the need for full and effective implementation of the WPS agenda. It should furthermore stress the importance of education, training and information for officials and professionals as well as an effective justice system to prevent, investigate and prosecute all forms of gender-based violence.

I thank you.