

## *Concept note*

# Security Council Arria-Formula Meeting on “Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence”.

Organized by: The Permanent Mission of Albania, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States.

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*Date:* 18 October 2023

*Time:* 3:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

*Location:* ECOSOC Chamber

*Participation:* The Arria-formula meeting is open to all UN Member States, Observer Offices, Non-Governmental Organizations, and the press.

To inscribe to deliver remarks, please provide the Member State name, speaker’s name, and title to [andris.stastoli@mfa.gov.al](mailto:andris.stastoli@mfa.gov.al) by 4 p.m. 17 October 2023. Participation at the Permanent Representative or Chargé d’Affaires level is encouraged.

Translation will be provided in all six languages.

All participants and members of the Security Council are encouraged to deliver succinct statements, with non-members of the Council limiting their statements to no longer than 3 minutes.

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### **Overview:**

Since 2008, the Security Council has been clearly voicing its concern, condemnation, and call for action in addressing conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), namely through resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2467 (2019).

Yet, despite a robust normative framework, conflict-related sexual violence persists in many parts of the world. It may be used as a tactic to punish civilians, humiliate adversaries, and terrorize communities.

In his latest report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, the Secretary-General underlined that during 2022, ‘across several settings, patterns of sexual violence persisted and deepened’. He also noted that his latest report should be read in conjunction with the 13 previous reports, which provide a cumulative basis not only for denouncing the State and non-State perpetrators but also for understanding that we are not even close to eliminating this scourge for humanity.

Where conflicts break out and laws break down, violations and crimes increase, including the terror and devastation of sexual violence. Like bombs and missiles that blow up residential areas, and schools, in many contexts, CRSV is used as a tactic of war to assault civilians, humiliate and ostracize survivors, scar minds, undermine the very fabric of humanity, and inflict immeasurable suffering on victims.

Violations of international humanitarian law often involve CRSV, which in certain circumstances may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, or other atrocities. In addition, acts of CRSV are an early warning indicator of increased risk for future atrocities.

This is unbearable and a stain on our collective efforts and commitments to respect human rights and uphold the principles and values that we cherish as humanity. Accountability remains fundamental in responding to, preventing, and ultimately eliminating CRSV. Sanctions remain a measure the Security Council can wield to deter such violence and induce behavioral change.

Sexual violence committed during conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, were expressions of deliberate cruelty and often were perpetrated on ethnic bases. The victims of such brutality, especially women, still bear the emotional burden of sexual violence, which in those conflicts, as in others around the world, were used as a tactic of war.

In his Report of March 2021 on Conflict-related sexual violence, the Secretary-General points out that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, “survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have struggled to achieve recognition as legitimate victims of the war and to access reparations and redress”. Perpetrators have successfully evaded justice for 27 years.

In Kosovo, reports from international organizations document the failings of the international community in bringing justice in many cases of conflict-related sexual violence.

Lack of accountability perpetuates an extremely dangerous cycle of impunity, emboldening those who commit sexual violence to continue their actions without any fear of consequences.

The fact that perpetrators are free and unpunished bears the threat that sexual violence in conflict can be tolerated and can continue to be used as a tactic of war, as we are currently witnessing in Ukraine, DRC, Darfur, and other regions.

Criminalization of the CRSV is crucial in addressing CRSV. National authorities should strengthen legislation to foster accountability for sexual violence. Domestic investigations and the judicial systems of Member States have a critical role to play in preventing conflict-related sexual violence and above all, ensuring accountability for those responsible.

In this regard, it remains imperative for the states to strengthen access to justice for women, girls, and all survivors in conflict and post-conflict situations, including through the prompt investigation of sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by either civilians or military personnel.

UN Security Council Resolution 2467 recognizes the need for a survivor-centred approach to preventing and responding to CRSV. Survivors play a vital role in advocating for action on CRSV and helping to shape efforts to address it. It is crucial that efforts to promote justice, empower survivors to rebuild their lives, and prevent CRSV from reoccurring are conducted in a survivor-centered way.

Member States have a critical role in prosecuting those responsible as well as in establishing and/or strengthening support mechanisms for post-conflict recovery for the survivors.

**Objectives:**

The objective of the meeting is to keep the attention and engagement of the Security Council on the need for stronger unified action against Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

This meeting also aims to highlight the direct link between impunity and the persistence of CRSV in different conflict situations around the globe.

It aims to raise awareness of the need to strengthen national and international mechanisms in the prosecution of the perpetrators of CRSV and to hold States to account for the violation of their international obligations as well as make justice more accessible for the survivors.

**Briefers and format:**

This Arria-formula meeting will be chaired by H.E. Mr. Igli Hasani, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, who will also deliver the opening remarks.

The invited briefers for this meeting will be:

1. H.E. Ms. Vjosa Osmani, President of the Republic of Kosovo (VTC)
2. Ms. Chloe Marnay-Baszanger, UN Team of experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict

3. Ms. Bakira Hasečić, human rights activist from Bosnia and Herzegovina
4. Ms. Niemat Ahmadi, founder of Darfur Women Action Group
5. Ms. Lyudmila Huseynova, human rights activist from Ukraine (VTC)

**Guiding Questions:**

1. What are the additional measures that the Security Council, as the leading organ with a binding role in the maintenance of international peace and security, could take in preventing and responding to CRSV?
2. What can be done to strengthen the mechanisms for exposing acts of CRSV, including long after the cessation of conflict, and to make sure those responsible can be held accountable?
3. How can the international community help in identifying and bringing to justice the commanders and senior decision-makers responsible for the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war?
4. Considering the direct link between impunity and persistence of the CRSV, what can be done to ensure that transitional justice measures address the full range of violations and abuses of women's human rights and the differentiated impacts on women and girls?
5. What measures could states take in order to ensure that survivors of sexual violence in conflict have access to legal aid, health and psychological care and lift the sociocultural stigma to facilitate rehabilitation efforts?
6. How can the international community ensure that efforts to prevent CRSV, deliver justice, and support survivors take a survivor-centered approach?