

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 16 October 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the pleasure to inform you that the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania, the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States Mission to the United Nations will organize an Arria-formula meeting on the theme “Preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence”.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, 18 October 2023, from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. in the Economic and Social Council Chamber at United Nations Headquarters.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic we have prepared a concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ferit **Hoxha**
Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 16 October 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Concept note for the Arria-formula meeting on the theme “Preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence”

Overview

Since 2008, the Security Council has been clearly voicing its concern, condemnation and call for action in addressing conflict-related sexual violence, 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 ([S/2023/413](#)), 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, conflict-related sexual violence 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 conflict-related sexual violence, which in certain circumstances may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or other atrocities. In addition, acts of conflict-related sexual violence 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 conflict-related sexual violence. Sanctions remain a measure that the Security Council can wield to deter such violence and induce behavioural 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, was used as a tactic of war.

In his report of March 2021 on conflict-related sexual violence ([S/2021/312](#)), 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, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur and other regions.

Criminalization of conflict-related sexual violence is crucial in addressing this matter. 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.

The Security Council, in resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#), recognizes the need for a survivor-centred approach to preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. Survivors play a vital role in advocating for action on conflict-related sexual violence and helping to shape efforts to address it. It is crucial that efforts to promote justice, empower survivors to rebuild their lives and prevent conflict-related sexual violence from reoccurring are conducted in a survivor-centred 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 conflict-related sexual violence 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 conflict-related sexual violence and to hold States to account for the violation of their international obligations, as well as make justice more accessible for the survivors.

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 conflict-related sexual violence?
2. What can be done to strengthen the mechanisms for exposing acts of conflict-related sexual violence, 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 conflict-related sexual violence, 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, and health and psychological care and lift the sociocultural stigma to facilitate rehabilitation efforts?
6. How can the international community ensure that efforts to prevent conflict-related sexual violence, deliver justice and support survivors take a survivor-centred approach?

Briefers

This Arria-formula meeting will be chaired by 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. Vjosa Osmani, President of the Republic of Kosovo (by video teleconference)
2. Chloe Marnay-Baszanger, United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict
3. Bakira Hasečić, human rights activist from Bosnia and Herzegovina
4. Niemat Ahmadi, founder of Darfur Women Action Group
5. Lyudmila Huseynova, human rights activist from Ukraine (by video teleconference)

Format

The Arria-formula meeting is organized by the Permanent Mission of Albania, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States. The meeting is open to all States Members of the United Nations, observer offices, non-governmental organizations and the press.

To register to deliver remarks, please provide the Member State name, speaker's name and title to andris.stastoli@mfa.gov.al by 4 p.m. on 17 October 2023. Participation at the Permanent Representative or Chargé d'affaires level is encouraged. Interpretation 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 three minutes.
