CONCEPT NOTE

SECURING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED CRIMES

16 MARCH 2016, 10AM-1PM

CONFERENCE ROOM 9

This side-event will take place during the Commission on the Status of Women, 16 March 2016, 10am-1pm. It will provide an opportunity for Member States, UN entities and civil society to learn from expert investigators about their recent experiences documenting conflict-related sexual and gender-based crimes for UN commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions. Speakers will also discuss the implications of these findings for the United Nations and beyond, and the importance of documenting conflict-related sexual and gender based violence as a critical first step toward accountability.

Background

The past year has been marked by mass displacements and a rise in violent extremism, while other protracted conflict situations remain critical. Sexual and gender-based crimes have featured across the range of these contexts, including in the perpetration of rape, forced marriage, and sexual slavery. The Security Council has stressed on many occasions the importance of holding perpetrators of conflict-related sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) accountable, not only as an end in itself but to address the impunity which threatens peace and security, and post-conflict recovery.

Accountability is not possible without the tools and capacity to undertake rapid and effective investigation and documentation of these crimes. The Justice Rapid Response (JRR)-UN Women SGBV Justice Experts Roster gives the Security Council, the organs of the United Nations, States, and regional organizations, such a tool.

JRR-UN Women Partnership

The JRR-UN Women partnership is a training, roster management and deployment mechanism that makes its expertise available rapidly to investigate SGBV crimes under international law. The joint Roster comprising of approximately 170 experts is maintained within the broader 550+ JRR Roster, with currently close to 50% of investigators from the Global South. These experts are available for rapid deployment to assist States as well as international institutions, UN entities and regional organizations with the jurisdiction to document or investigate international crimes.

Since 2009, every UN commission of inquiry has had a gender adviser or SGBV investigator on its team as a result of deployments from the JRR-UN Women Roster. As knowledge and visibility of this specific facility and partnership has increased, requests for deployments have similarly grown, expanding UN Women’s use of the roster beyond commissions of inquiry to a range of different mechanisms. It is clear that the
deployment of these investigators is strengthening the ability of these mechanisms to highlight the extent of sexual and gender-based violations committed during periods of conflict, mobilizing international as well as national momentum to secure accountability for these crimes.

Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/23/25 (14 June 2013) specifically calls for the use of rosters such as the JRR-UN Women SGBV Justice Experts Roster to ensure the rapid deployment of expertise to investigate allegations of mass rape or systematic sexual violence. Member States and international criminal justice personnel cited the roster as a best practice at the UK Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June 2014.

The sensitivities surrounding SGBV crimes, including the vulnerability of victims, means that investigators require special training. This partnership has supported the development of a unique, highly specialized training curriculum on the investigation of SGBV as international crimes with the Institute for International Criminal Investigations. This training includes modules on interviewing victims and witnesses without detriment to their safety, privacy, and dignity.

**There can be no accountability for crimes which go undocumented.** The training and deployment of SGBV experts through the JRR-UN Women partnership has catalyzed the ability of international and national mechanisms to secure accountability for these crimes. The partnership has ensured these justice processes effectively investigate and document SGBV committed during periods of conflict, thereby increasing the likelihood that victims of these crimes will see justice done.

The occasion of the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women presents an opportunity to draw together Member States, UN entities and civil society, to discuss the contributions of investigations of conflict related sexual and gender-based crimes toward accountability, deterrence and prevention.

**Objectives**
The overall objective of the event is to encourage Member States to continue and strengthen their support for the partnership between JRR and UN Women. Support for this partnership is an integral part of a commitment to strengthen all efforts at justice and accountability for conflict-related SGBV. The briefing will also provide an opportunity for Member States, civil society and UN entities to hear first-hand about the work of experts investigating SGBV, and the impacts of this work.

**Format**
The agenda will include introductions by the co-sponsors, followed by presentations on the gender-related findings and recommendations by SGBV investigators from the JRR-UN Women Roster. This will be followed by a question and answer session. We look forward to your attendance and active participation.