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**Advancement of women**

**Letter dated 26 November 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I would like to thank you for your reply to the letter sent by my Foreign Secretary, the Rt. Hon. William Hague, dated 5 November 2013, regarding the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. We too look forward to further close collaboration with you on this important issue.

I should be grateful if you would circulate a copy of the Foreign Secretary's letter and the Declaration and the list of supporters (see annex) as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 28, Advancement of women.

*(Signed)* Mark Lyall Grant



**Annex to the letter dated 26 November 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

**Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict**

I am honoured to share with you a copy of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict (see enclosure), which I launched at the meeting I co-hosted with your Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mrs. Zainab Hawa Bangura, on 24 September. It included a list of those countries that have so far endorsed the Declaration.

I am delighted that in addition to the co-authors Australia, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Guatemala, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Liberia, Malawi, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Timor-Leste, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States, a further 113 countries have expressed their support, bringing the total number of endorsing Governments to 135 over two thirds of the General Assembly membership I would strongly invite countries that have yet to endorse the Declaration to do so.

I am deeply grateful to all those who have shown such support for our efforts. As the Declaration sets out, I truly believe that through political and practical cooperation and renewed focus and impetus, the international community can, once and for all, bring an end to this abhorrent crime. I remain committed to doing so and to working closely with the supporting Governments and the United Nations, including in the run-up to the international conference I will host on this issue in 2014, to achieve this outcome.

*(Signed)* William **Hague**

## **Enclosure**

### **A Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict**

The widespread use of rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflicts around the world is one of the greatest, most persistent and most neglected injustices. Sexual violence in conflict inflicts unimaginable suffering. It is designed to destroy individuals, families and communities. In so doing it perpetuates conflict and instability, often for generations. But it is not an inevitable consequence of war. We applaud all that the United Nations, other multilateral organizations and civil society have done to halt this human tragedy. We commit our fullest support to them. But for too long those who commit these crimes, and their superiors who condone them, have gone unpunished. As an international community we can — and must — do more to prevent and respond to these acts of barbarism.

Under international humanitarian law there is a long-standing prohibition of sexual violence in armed conflict. Sexual violence also represents one of the most serious forms of violation or abuse of an individual's human rights. Sexual violence in conflict can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security, as reflected in many relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, including those on women, peace and security, children and armed conflict, and protection of civilians in armed conflict. We express serious and ongoing concern with the role played by illicit weapons in the commission or facilitation of serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. Preventing and responding to sexual violence is vital to resolving conflicts, enabling development and building sustainable peace. We must address the range of factors which contribute to sexual violence in conflict and put in place a comprehensive operational security and justice response, in a manner consistent with applicable international law.

Sexual violence committed in conflict must not be viewed as a lesser crime. The overwhelming majority of victims never see justice for what they have endured nor receive the necessary assistance and support. We must shatter the culture of impunity for those who commit these crimes, by bringing those responsible to justice — as a critical element of our prevention efforts. There should be no safe haven for the perpetrators. We stress the important contribution of the ad hoc and mixed international criminal tribunals, the International Criminal Court and chambers in national tribunals to ending impunity by ensuring accountability and punishing perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. We recall that rape and other forms of serious sexual violence in armed conflict are war crimes and constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and their first Protocol.

Ensuring women's and girls' full human rights and fundamental freedoms and women's active, full and equal political, social and economic participation, including in all conflict prevention and resolution, justice and security sector processes, as well as in wider development activities, is critical to ending sexual violence in conflict. But we must also recognise that men and boys are victims of this crime, as are those who are forced to witness or perpetrate this violence against their family or community members. Our efforts must also serve to shift the stigma of shame from the victims of these crimes to those who commit, command and condone them.

We therefore pledge to do more to raise awareness of these crimes, to challenge the impunity that exists and to hold perpetrators to account, to provide better support to victims, and to support both national and international efforts to build the capacity to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict. We are determined to:

- Ensure that sexual violence prevention and response efforts are prioritized and adequately funded from the first phase and throughout all responses to conflict and humanitarian emergencies.
- Provide better, more timely and comprehensive assistance and care, including health and psychosocial care that addresses the long-term consequences of sexual violence in conflict, to female, male and child victims and their families, including children born as the result of sexual violence.
- Ensure that all peace, security and conflict mediation processes explicitly recognize the need to prevent, respond to and reduce crimes of sexual violence in conflict and stressed the need to exclude such crimes from amnesty provisions.
- Promote women's full participation in all political, governance and security structures, as well as all decision-making processes, including peace negotiations, peacebuilding, prevention and accountability efforts, recognising the important contribution that national action plans on United Nations Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) can play in this regard, and ensure that such processes also take into full consideration the needs and rights of women and children.
- Strengthen United Nations efforts to address sexual violence in conflict and provide further support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict as chair of UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.
- Strengthen and support the efforts of regional organizations to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict in their peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives.
- Support conflict-affected States in strengthening their capacity to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict and to develop and implement national security sector and justice reform programmes that take into full consideration the needs and rights of women and children.
- Support the deployment of national and international expertise at the request of host Governments, the United Nations and other international organizations to build national capacity to hold perpetrators to account and to improve the response and support to victims and their access to justice.
- Ensure our national military and police doctrine and training is in accordance with international law so as to enable a more effective prevention and response to sexual violence in conflict.
- Encourage and improve the safe and ethical collection of data and evidence relating to acts of sexual violence committed in conflict, to inform national and international responses.

- Encourage, support and protect the efforts of civil society organizations, including women's groups and human rights defenders, to improve the monitoring and documentation of cases of sexual violence in conflict without fear of reprisal and empower victims to access justice.
- Support and encourage the development of the International Protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict at national, regional and international levels, with a view to its conclusion in 2014.

By working together, sharing our knowledge and our experience, mobilizing resources and committing our global political will we are determined to end the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as weapons of war. This crime must not be allowed to continue any further. Now is the time to act.

This Declaration is endorsed by the following countries:

1. Afghanistan
2. Albania
3. Algeria
4. Andorra
5. Angola
6. Argentina
7. Armenia
8. Australia
9. Austria
10. Azerbaijan
11. Bahrain
12. Barbados
13. Belgium
14. Belize
15. Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
16. Bosnia and Herzegovina
17. Botswana
18. Brazil
19. Brunei Darussalam
20. Bulgaria
21. Burundi
22. Cambodia
23. Canada
24. Cape Verde

25. Chile
26. Colombia
27. Costa Rica
28. Croatia
29. Cyprus
30. Czech Republic
31. Denmark
32. Democratic Republic of the Congo
33. Dominican Republic
34. Egypt
35. El Salvador
36. Estonia
37. Ethiopia
38. Fiji
39. Finland
40. France
41. Gabon
42. Gambia
43. Georgia
44. Germany
45. Ghana
46. Greece
47. Grenada
48. Guatemala
49. Guinea
50. Guyana
51. Haiti
52. Honduras
53. Hungary
54. Iceland
55. Indonesia
56. Iraq
57. Ireland
58. Israel

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59. Italy
  60. Jamaica
  61. Japan
  62. Jordan
  63. Kuwait
  64. Latvia
  65. Lebanon
  66. Liberia
  67. Libya
  68. Liechtenstein
  69. Lithuania
  70. Luxembourg
  71. Malawi
  72. Malaysia
  73. Maldives
  74. Malta
  75. Mexico
  76. Monaco
  77. Mongolia
  78. Montenegro
  79. Morocco
  80. Mozambique
  81. Namibia
  82. Nauru
  83. Nepal
  84. Netherlands
  85. New Zealand
  86. Norway
  87. Oman
  88. Palau
  89. Panama
  90. Papua New Guinea
  91. Paraguay
  92. Peru

93. Philippines
94. Poland
95. Portugal
96. Qatar
97. Republic of the Congo
98. Republic of Korea
99. Republic of Moldova
100. Romania
101. Rwanda
102. Saint Kitts and Nevis
103. Samoa
104. San Marino
105. Sao Tome and Principe
106. Saudi Arabia
107. Senegal
108. Serbia
109. Seychelles
110. Sierra Leone
111. Singapore
112. Slovakia
113. Slovenia
114. South Africa
115. South Sudan
116. Somalia
117. Spain
118. Sweden
119. Switzerland
120. Thailand
121. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
122. Timor-Leste
123. Togo
124. Tunisia
125. Turkey
126. United Arab Emirates



- 127. United Kingdom
  - 128. United Republic of Tanzania
  - 129. United States of America
  - 130. Uganda
  - 131. Ukraine
  - 132. Uruguay
  - 133. Vietnam
  - 134. Yemen
  - 135. Zambia
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