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Panel on complementarity, 19 November 2015

Statement: Panel 2- Enhancing empowerment of victims of sexual and gender-based crimes

Delivered by Sweden's Minister for Culture and Democracy, H.E. Ms. Alice Bah Kuhnke

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are discussing here today: Ensuring access to justice and the empowerment of victims.

I believe they are mutually reinforcing and interdependent. It is hard to achieve one of them without the other.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the main priorities of our feminist foreign policy is to strengthen women's access to resources.

During 2014, only 35 percent of economic support in post-conflict recovery programs went to women. The rest, needless to say, ended up with the other sex.

To achieve real change, political commitments need to be accompanied by sustainable financing with measures to address root causes of violence.

Sweden vows to continue promoting women's social, political and economic empowerment.

We will continue to counter narratives that reinforce negative gender roles.

And we will also continue to support organizations working to engage men and boys in the pursuit of gender justice.

Recent good practice from conflict-affected countries show the importance of engaging men and boys to prevent sexual and gender-based crimes from being committed in the first place.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sweden applies a broad approach to the empowerment of victims. We try to connect international expertise and practitioners with development cooperation, national justice mechanisms and civil society.

Let me give a few examples of how joining forces can contribute to empowering victims to access justice.

In Guatemala, we are working with partners – including the Attorney General's Office – to strengthen capacity of national investigations and prosecutions of serious sexual and gender-based crimes.

We also provide support to the UNDP transitional justice program, and to Unicef.

We address the empowerment of victims through supporting civil society organizations, including women's rights and victims' organizations.

One example is our support to the work of the civil society organization Kvinna till Kvinna in Iraq and Syria.

Their work is crucial in building networks of women at the grassroots level that drive change bottom-up. In this way, responses to sexual and gender-based violence are strengthened.

Our support to the ICC Trust Fund for Victims amounts to 4 million euro during the last three years. The result is the empowerment of victims of sexual and gender-based crimes in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As a main donor to UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, we are supporting victims in a range of different countries worldwide.

Let me take just an example: UN Action has funded the deployment of Women's Protection Advisers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire.

In Côte d'Ivoire, a new national strategy to combat gender-based violence was launched during a UN Action inter-agency mission last year.

The UN Team of Experts has also provided assistance to the Central African Republic to improve investigations of sexual and gender-based crimes.

The panel of judges in Guinea has also been supported by the Team of Experts

This has resulted in indictment for crimes allegedly committed during the events of September 28th in 2009, including sexual violence.

Organizations such as Justice Rapid Response should be utilized as a means to strengthen national capacity through the rapid deployment of expertise.

I am pleased that Justice Rapid Response has strengthened its cooperation with UN Women.

Let us also welcome that a separate roster for experts on the investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based crimes has been launched.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Sustainable solutions and measures to address root causes of violence are necessary.

As some of you might know, Sweden is committed to allocating 1 percent of our GDI to development cooperation.

Let me also assure that gender equality, as well as women's rights and empowerment, will remain top priorities in our development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

To conclude: If our common commitment is to be taken seriously, we need to make sure that women's voices are being heard.

The needs and realities of women living in conflict and post-conflict countries must influence our decisions.

We must pledge to continue to work together with international and regional organizations. With states, civil society organizations, and not least with affected women and men themselves.

And our goal will remain the same: To empower women to claim their rights.

Because women's rights are human rights.

Thank you.