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139th IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

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Standing Committee on
Peace and International Security

1 October 2018

Panel discussion on *Combating sexual violence in UN peacekeeping operations and beyond*

*Monday 15 October 2018 (4.30 – 6.30 p.m.)
Rooms 3 & 4, level 0, CICG*

Concept note

Background

The sexual abuse of women and children—girls in particular—in conflict continues despite United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and its seven subsequent resolutions which provide a framework for the United Nations to end such abuse.

Apart from conflict situations as such, the aid sector, including the United Nations at least since 1990, has been involved in a number of high-profile sexual abuse cases. Nonetheless, it was not until 2014 that such misconduct, denounced by whistle-blowers—which put them at grave risk—was brought to the world's attention.

The sexual abuse of women and children in wartime cannot end if peacekeepers and aid workers themselves are among the abusers. The failure to protect these women and children, as well as those reporting the misconduct, is not only a failure of the United Nations, but also the failure of its Member States. The problem, therefore, is not a lack of UN resolutions that protect women and children in wartime, but compliance with the resolutions by the United Nations and its Member States. In addition, the United Nations lacks the mechanisms to enforce accountability because it does not have jurisdiction over peacekeepers and aid workers. It is the Member States that are responsible for prosecuting abusers.

The session will address the following questions:

- What specific steps can parliamentarians take to ensure that the existing framework to end sexual violence against women and children is enforced?
- How can parliamentarians fight impunity and ensure accountability in the United Nations and in the aid sector so that humanitarians and peacekeepers are no longer be above the law?
- To what extent do parliaments make use of parliamentary procedures to provide support to whistle-blowers?

Expected achievement and outcome:

Specifically, the panel will aim to discuss how parliamentarians around the world can contribute to ending the sexual abuse of women and children during peacekeeping missions and beyond. The debate will address the challenges to implementing parliamentary monitoring and oversight of UN peacekeeping operations and to protecting whistle-blowers. It should show that such oversight is aimed at enforcing the democratic legitimacy of humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping missions and at ensuring that the highest standards of accountability as well as due process under the law are followed. A road map for parliamentary action could be drafted based on the discussions.

Format

The session will be an interactive discussion between parliamentarians and experts. After introductory remarks by the panellists, the floor will be open for an exchange of views, and for questions and answers.

#IPU139