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**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR ZHEGLOV,  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1321st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

24 June 2021

**On the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict**

Madam Chairperson,

On 19 June, the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 was celebrated. Its main objective, as set out in General Assembly resolution 69/293, which established it, is “to raise awareness of the need to put an end to conflict-related sexual violence”.

Combating sexual violence in conflicts and in peacebuilding processes is a primary responsibility of national governments. This is also confirmed in the resolution. On the international stage, the United Nations Security Council plays a leading, co-ordinating role in consolidating efforts to counter this evil.

The Russian Federation strongly condemns all forms of violence against civilians, including sexual violence, in armed conflict. We are committed to international co-operation in this field. Terrorist groups are increasingly using sexual violence as a tactic of war. We therefore need to step up our joint efforts to combat terrorism.

It is important to remember, however, that sexual violence is not the only phenomenon to occur in armed conflicts. That being the case, the targeted eradication of this type of crime is extremely difficult. The only way to end war crimes is to end armed conflict.

Sexual violence is often considered a human rights violation. This is correct. But in the context of armed conflicts there is a need first of all to consider international humanitarian law.

The issue of combating sexual violence should be regarded as an integral part of the whole set of measures for conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. There is no conclusive evidence that sexual violence is among the root causes of conflict. Rather, it is one of the terrible consequences.

Rape and other acts of sexual abuse are regarded as crimes in all countries. At the same time, there is a need to foster a culture of rejection by society of such abhorrent acts. Measures are required to rehabilitate victims and prevent them from being stigmatized. Religious leaders and local communities in particular could play an important role in this regard.

Thank you for your attention.