

Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Conference 2022: a Political Declaration on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

Conflict-related sexual violence can threaten international peace and security, and destroys lives and communities. Many survivors are still waiting for truth, justice and support. The international community has made progress in addressing conflict-related sexual violence, including through UN Security Council Resolutions (eg. 1325, 1820, 1888, 1960, 2106, 2331 and 2467), the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and launching the *Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict* at the UN General Assembly in 2013, which now has 156 supporting member states. However, as we reflect on 10 years of collective action, it is clear that progress must be accelerated to strengthen prevention, response, justice and accountability and most importantly support for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

At the PSVI International Conference in London, 28-29 November 2022, we agreed to urgently accelerate action to end conflict-related sexual violence, hold those responsible to account, shatter the existing culture of impunity, provide more comprehensive support to survivors, and tackle stigma. Through this Political Declaration and the attached Compact we each make commitments to action that reflect our diverse contexts, capabilities, and influence - to play our part in driving change.

Acts of conflict-related sexual violence are prohibited under international criminal law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, but more can be done to improve adherence. We will work to strengthen the **global response**, including through greater international coordination, renewed commitment to allocate resources, and building the global evidence base of what works to maximise the efficacy of our interventions, recognising the importance of national and local contexts.

We must do more to **prevent** conflict-related sexual violence. Conflict-related sexual violence perpetuates armed conflict and undermines transitions to peace and long-term stability. It is fundamentally rooted in gender inequality and occurs alongside other forms of gender-based violence before, during and after conflict. It is often used deliberately to intimidate, humiliate and control communities. However, conflict-related sexual violence is preventable and is not an inevitable by-product of conflict. There is a growing evidence base of effective approaches to tackle its root causes and deliver quality, survivor-centred responses. We will continue working towards a world in which conflict-related sexual violence does not take place.

Victims, survivors and children born as a result of conflict-related sexual violence are at the heart of our approach and we stand with them. Whilst victims and survivors are predominantly women and girls, we know that men and boys also experience conflict-related sexual violence, and that members of marginalised groups are often also at high risk. We will drive change in a **survivor-centred** way through amplifying their voices, empowering them to live their lives to the fullest, tackling stigma, and enabling access to truth, justice and accountability and to holistic support, including

comprehensive health services, psychosocial services, and the livelihood support needed to recover and heal.

Conflict-related sexual violence must be tackled as part of wider global efforts to end all forms of gender-based violence and violence against marginalised groups at greater risk, achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, implement global Women, Peace and Security commitments, and promote and defend comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. We remain firm in our ambition to deliver our commitments in these areas, including: strengthening humanitarian responses to gender-based violence, including by ensuring access to clinical management of rape and championing the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies; preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the aid sector; ensuring access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health at the outset and throughout crises; and striving to meet Sustainable Development Goal 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, including by acting on Generation Equality Forum commitments. We recognise the critical work of women-led and women's rights civil society organisations, and survivors themselves, for preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence.

Ending conflict-related sexual violence requires a multisectoral approach from States and a collective, strengthened global response. Together we make the following commitments to action:

1. **To strengthen the global response to conflict-related sexual violence.** The international community must work in partnership to tackle conflict-related sexual violence, allocating additional resources, stepping up global coordination, and promoting victim- and survivor-centric approaches. The global evidence base on what works to tackle conflict-related sexual violence must be strengthened and utilised to ensure interventions are data-driven.
2. **To prevent conflict-related sexual violence from occurring** through addressing its drivers, such as gender inequality and harmful social norms.
3. **To strengthen justice for all those affected by conflict-related sexual violence** and hold perpetrators to account, including as a means of prevention. National laws must provide the tools to prosecute perpetrators and give effect to international obligations. Victims, survivors and children born as a result of conflict-related sexual violence and affected communities must be able to access meaningful justice as defined by survivors themselves, with judicial systems designed to respond effectively to their needs. Approaches such as the Accountability Commission and Taskforce (A.C.T) for Survivors can support delivery of survivor-centred accountability.
4. **To make available and co-create holistic and meaningful support to victims and survivors, communities and children born as a result of conflict-related sexual violence, including by tackling stigma.** The barriers that prevent access to holistic, quality support services must be removed. The stigma faced by victims, survivors and children born of conflict-related sexual violence must be addressed, including through community-level approaches and engagement by faith leaders.

In supporting the commitments in this declaration, and our national commitments set out in the attached CRSV Compact, we agree to hold ourselves to account to deliver them, including by reporting on progress through existing multilateral reporting mechanisms.

This Political Declaration on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence has been endorsed by:

- Albania
- Argentina
- Australia
- Austria
- Bangladesh
- Belgium
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Chile
- Colombia
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Ecuador
- Estonia
- France
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy

- Japan
- Jordan
- Kosovo
- Latvia
- Lebanon
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Portugal
- Serbia
- Sierra Leone
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Republic of Korea
- South Sudan
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Timor Leste
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten
- United States of America
- Uruguay