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R E M A R K S

by EU High Representative at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by saying to William Hague and to Angelina Jolie thank you.

Thank you not just for bringing us all here today, but for all of the efforts that you have put in over years to bring us this to this moment and to put the prevention of sexual violence in conflict high on the international agenda. Because ending the silence on this issue is the first step towards stopping it.

Today as you said it is about our willingness to take more steps, to protect those who are at risk, to assist those who have been targeted and to end the impunity of those who commit these crimes.

We know that these terrible crimes feed on areas of instability. We have seen the escalation of sexual violence in Sudan, in Mali, in Colombia, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Libya to name just a few examples. And we know that only by acting together can we stop it.

From the European Union, so many nations of the EU represented here today, we have been working with individual countries, with the United Nations, with the African Union and with other organisations to bring about change.

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We support systematic inclusion of the prevention of sexual violence in every UN mandate. We fund activities to support victims and to prevent further crimes at national, regional and international level.

And we do this practical work based on three pillars. The first is to make sure we secure universal recognition. We need to highlight the seriousness and the extent of this problem. And that means changing attitudes and perceptions which are often deep rooted.

I have made this part of the everyday work of every operation we have around the world, to systematically integrate human rights and gender considerations into every crisis management operation that the European Union launches. When we train soldiers in partner countries, we ensure that human rights are a central element. Our network of delegations has human rights focal points to make sure that in every country we are represented in, we report and we raise concerns.

Our second pillar is access to justice and accountability. Some countries have laws in place that prevent and persecute conflict-related sexual violence. But many don't. Without the right laws and the willingness of countries to implement them, impunity will continue. And that is why it is important in a practical way that we support and fund security and justice sector reforms in a number of different countries and why conflict-related sexual violence is explicitly reflected in that support.

And our third pillar, the participation of women in mediation, in conflict prevention and in peace building. It is vital. You know that women make societies thrive when they get full access to political and economic decision-making. We have over decades built a global network of civil society partners and community leaders, some of whom are here today. Last year I hosted a group of women leaders from the Sahel and I saw their determination to find solutions to the crisis and what was happening to them and their sisters and brothers in terms of sexual violence. They were inspiring.

So I say to all of you: the European Union, its Member States, its Institutions, is and will remain a strong partner in the fight against sexual violence in conflict. And we will work with everyone who is determined as we are to make this history rather than a terrible problem of our present.

Thank you."
