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Inquiry on

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

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Witness: Madame Bineta Diop

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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Members present

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (Chairman)
 Lord Hannay of Chiswick
 Baroness Hilton of Eggardon
 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead
 Baroness Warsi
 Baroness Young of Hornsey

Examination of Witness

Madame Bineta Diop, Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, African Union (via videolink)

Q79 The Chairman: Good morning Madame Diop, how are you? Thank you very much for joining us.

Madame Bineta Diop: Thank you so much, Lord Chairman. I am very happy to speak to you this morning. I think this will be a fruitful session, and I am very honoured to have this conversation about the issue of sexual abuse and what the African Union is doing.

The Chairman: Madame Diop, we are on the record, but the written note will come to you to make sure that there are no inaccuracies that you wish to correct. We are broadcasting, and it will be on the parliamentary website. A very warm welcome to you from the Committee. As you know, we are examining the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, and we very badly need the African Union input into our discussions. We have a number of Committee Members with us this morning, and we are very much looking forward to this discussion. I think you know who we are and what our interests are personally. If you are ready, can you give a little introduction about your work?

Madame Bineta Diop: I feel very honoured to have this discussion on my mandate, Lord Chairman. The African Union finds this discussion very relevant to our work. I know what you are doing and who you are, and that this inquiry will very much inform the House of Lords.

Having said that, since I was mandated in January 2004, my work has been very much about going into the field and making sure that the voices of the voiceless have been heard. The African Union has worked very hard to make sure that women's peace and security in general are addressed within the peace and security architecture. Five years ago, when Mary Robinson and I were evaluating Resolution 1325, we co-chaired the civil society advisory group to the UN, and one of our demands was to have a Special Envoy either at the UN or at the regional board. Since that demand at regional and international levels we have had one Special Envoy in the UN, who was Mary—now she is on climate change—and the African Union has appointed me as Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security. We need to have more special envoys, because that highlights the plight of women on the ground and makes sure that we do not leave anybody behind. Especially on gender-based violence, it is important that our bodies are informed.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for that introduction. We highly respect the work of the African Union in general and your task and mandate in particular.

Madame Bineta Diop: Thank you.

Q80 The Chairman: My first question, Madame Diop, is that in today's world it seems that, more and more often, very well organised armed groups carry out sexual violence as part of their conflict within their nation. Nigeria is a particular example, as well as some of the north African countries now. Can you tell us how the African Union finds ways to address this, given that these are not proper States but very big, well run and very ferocious and violent armed groups? How does the African Union see a way of finding tools to address this problem when they are outside the UN mandates?

Madame Bineta Diop: First of all, we need to see it in a broader context, starting from what the African Union is doing in terms of sexual abuse and exploitation. The chairperson of the African Union, Madame Zuma, articulated a zero-tolerance policy. She started by saying that there is no way that we can send our troops and then they abuse the people they are supposed to protect. I started from there. We have put several tools in place at the AU level. We started with the zero-tolerance policy, which has been adopted at the AU level. We have also developed gender-training for peacekeeping when we send troops, such as with UNSOM. We have also devoted an open session at the Peace and Security Council of the AU to invite those who are in the field to come and testify to the Council. So when we look into the whole continental early-warning system, we also have gender indicators. In general, the AU is also deploying experts and officers in peacekeeping operations, and now, as you see, we are employing women as special envoys and representatives. That is the general framework that the AU is putting in place.

Coming back to the issue of Boko Haram and al-Shabaab, the terrorist rebels who you find on the ground, I have visited northern Nigeria twice and met the Chibok girls who had escaped. I also visited UNSOM in Somalia and met women who had been violated. We had a closed session with them to discuss this. The AU is working at international and regional levels and putting centres in place to counter terrorism in general.

I will give an example of what we do in particular for those women. After I had visited I came back and asked for an open session. I brought a film of the girls who had been abducted and raped and showed it to the Peace and Security Council of the AU. Members were alarmed at the situation on the ground and a communiqué was issued as a result. The AU has taken measures to say that we do not tolerate this issue of gender-based violence any more. This was addressed to the Nigerian government but in general also to the international community, saying that we need to fight against terrorism but that we also need to do more to bring to the fore the issue of accountability with regard to sexual violence. That is one of the first steps.

On the second step, I recently convened a committee at the Kofi Annan centre in Accra. I invited women from northern Nigeria but also from Somalia and other parts where we are likely to see terrorist acts. We had a discussion and shared experiences. One of the actions that we are looking at is how women who are members of the intelligence services can have the tools to act on the information that we can see. When you go to Somalia and ask the people in the villages about al-Shabaab, we know that they are in the community. So we need to know how to generate and gather information, but we also need to make sure that women are part of that process of identifying those who have infiltrated the communities.

The other issue is religion. At the end of last year I was invited to the Carter Center—President Carter was good enough to be with us for the whole time I was there—and we had a discussion on religion and how we make sure that women are also equipped to interpret their religion, whether that is the Koran or the Bible. We need to make sure that those instruments are gender-led. Being Christian or Muslim is a personal choice, but we also need to penetrate the public sphere as we are penetrating our governance structure—women are now in the political structure, in peace and security and in our military services. We now need to look at the interpretation of Islam, because that is where children are sometimes embroiled and they might not understand those issues. So we are looking at gender-specific strategies to make sure that we address the issue of fundamentalist terrorist groups.

Q81 The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. What a comprehensive and fascinating set of answers. I have a second question, before I turn to other colleagues to ask theirs. You mentioned protocols. Has the UK Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative protocol assisted the African Union at all in any preventive techniques? I am thinking particularly of situations such as that in Burundi, where there is turbulence that might spill over. Does the PSVI protocol assist at all, or have you found it not particularly helpful?

Madame Bineta Diop: We have found it very helpful, as we partner the UK in training and in awareness-raising, but we have found it particularly helpful on the issue of Burundi. The chairperson of the African Union and I visited Burundi as part of a preventive-measure mission. We met women's groups, the church, even the highest level of government—heads of state and others—and issues relating to women, gender-based violence and civilian protection were under discussion there.

What is also important is that we are now deploying human rights officers and observers in Burundi who use the tools when they are observing. They also observe issues of gender-based violence, because it exists in some places. In the communiqué of the AU, when we talk about civilians in Burundi and in other cases, you will see underlined the protection of women but also the protection of civilians and children in general. So the language is changing, because we are changing the reading lengths on the ground by the personnel who we are deploying on the ground.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. I turn now to one of my colleagues, Lord Hannay, who wishes to follow up your point about peacekeeping.

Q82 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Good morning, Madame Diop, and thank you very much for touching on a particular aspect of this problem of sexual violence in conflict, which is the allegations, sometimes quite well-justified I think, that peacekeepers, both UN and in some cases African Union, have been involved in sexual violence. You very helpfully spoke about that in general, but I wanted to ask you more specifically what the African Union has in mind to ensure that all peacekeeping units that are put forward for operations do really thorough training on all these gender issues and the need to avoid any suspicion at all of sexual violence.

Secondly, do you share the general view that the method of prosecuting such allegations has proved to be pretty defective in the past? The jurisdiction lies with each troop-contributor, and troop-contributors are not necessarily the most zealous in following up allegations about their own troops. At the same time, the country in which the operation takes place probably does not have a legal system that can handle it. What thought are you giving to the

recent report for the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which suggests that there might need to be something more than that? What do you think about the idea of a special jurisdiction that would deal with peacekeeping, and would the African Union keep in absolute step with the UN in any changes that are made? Thank you very much.

Madame Bineta Diop: Thank you so much for this question. The issue of peacekeeping is at the heart of African Union policy, as we are also putting African troops on the ground. As you also rightly said, not just African troops but UN troops and some Member States' troops are also alleged to have violated human rights and women's rights on the ground.

When it comes to the African Union, there was a report recently on the issue of Somalia. Under the leadership of Madame Zuma, the African Union sent an independent team to investigate those allegations, and they came back with a report. I think this is the first time that the AU has sent an independent team of experts to investigate. There was not enough evidence, but the chairperson, Madame Zuma, sent them back, saying, "No, I want a really deep stake in the ground. I want you to find a witness. It is very difficult for those who have been violated. Go and see". So the report came back, of course, with the finding that it had happened—not in a basic way, but it had happened. The chairperson decided to address particular countries whose troops have been involved to make sure that those troops or those elements are called back. I think it has happened in one case. So you can see that there have been a lot of improvements in the way the AU deals with sexual abuse and exploitation.

Another case is South Sudan. I was one of two women—the other woman was a judge—out of five members of the investigation team led by President Obasanjo going to South Sudan. If you look at the reports, the majority of our findings are on sexual abuse and the rape of women, so much under false pretences. So when we came back we submitted our report, which is now in the hands of IGAD Member States.

Then there is the proposal for a tribunal, which has been accepted by the two parties, which is also in the accord on South Sudan. It came from our report on the investigation, so we are moving forward. In that tribunal, I am sure that this issue of gender-based violence will be very much to the fore, because our findings on the previous case are very clear. So the AU is really moving forward. There is the possibility right now with the trial in Senegal of Hissène Habré, the former President of Chad. As you may know, civil society and women's groups are pushing for the issue of gender-based violence to be addressed as part and parcel of that trial. So it is not perfect, and I think it will take time to make it perfect. One of the demands of women not only in the AU but in civil society women's groups is that once it has happened, one of the punishments should be to move the whole contingent out of the country, even if it is only one element.

Last week I was in the Central African Republic. As I said, my work is on the ground, meeting the women, sitting with them and encouraging them. Of their demands, the issue of justice and the fight against impunity are very much at the top. They are preparing for the elections but are also starting to look at those who have been affected to make sure that any provision for training of countries and so on will take the issue into consideration.

Lastly, the AU has sent a team of African doctors, called Médecins d'Afrique—African Doctors—to the Central African Republic, who right now are working in the communities on reconstructing people's minds in the community, which involves psychological support and trauma counselling. Those are the steps that the AU is taking, but we also think that

compensation and support for victims should be one of the priorities by creating a fund that can address that in the aftermath of the conflict.

In terms of jurisdiction, the AU always partners the UN in the commitment to peace and security. The Security Council is in charge of the peace of the world, but the AU also carries out peacekeeping operations, laying the foundations for international peacekeeping to come. So our operations are clearly in line with international standards; that is what the AU is trying to do. Jurisdiction should also be adopted by the AU Member States, as the chairperson, Madame Zuma, is very much against following up: everything should be put in place to prevent sexual violence in conflict in the first place.

Q83 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: Thank you very much indeed for sharing your extensive understanding of these issues and telling us how you are dealing with this. I certainly value the attention that you have given this morning to the collaboration with the UN on these matters, which is very welcome indeed.

To follow up on the issues that you have just raised, what is your view on the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, which I think you are very well aware of? In the countries we are talking about, access to legal systems is often not there for them, in the CAR, in South Sudan, in conflict and so on, so that going into the legalities of what has been happening is, I think you will agree, quite difficult. It has been suggested that the UN should waive the immunity of its personnel in order that trials can take place. What is your view on that, and do you think that is a realistic objective? Do you agree that there should be proper investigations, and that the UN should be able to waive immunity for the enforcement of prosecution of those accused of abuses of human rights? That is a very important issue for us.

Also, I have heard the suggestion that, whenever appropriate, there should be courts martial for military personnel in peacekeeping missions, and that just because they are peacekeepers and associated with various countries in Africa they should not be allowed to escape the various necessary and proper analyses of what has happened. I wondered what your view was on that, because I have been looking at the Convention on Privileges and Immunities, and I wondered how much that is there in your thoughts and reflected in your actions.

Madame Bineta Diop: Thank you so much. On privileges and immunities, as you know, when we send peacekeepers, they are under the army of the country that sends the troops. For example, in Africa, Burundi, Rwanda or any places to which troops are sent, they are under command. At the AU we very much work with the special representatives. For UNSOM, for example, we have a special AU representative who looks into those issues. We put into his mandate first the issue of monitoring gender-based violence on the ground and within the military itself. When I visited Somalia, I met the representative and the deputy—a man and a woman—who will comment on preventing sexual violence, even within the army for example, and ask for a different setting for the women and the men in the military. So are looking at further protection even of the military, men and women, who we are sending.

In terms of allegations, when there is an allegation of abuse, as I said we do due diligence, go on the ground and set up an independent commission of inquiry, which comes up with issues that will be presented to the Peace and Security Council. Who will now take the decision? Not the AUC but the security council will decide, and for the time being the troops

will be sent back home. That is what is happening. There have been cases in Somalia where a person who was targeted was sent back home or the government or the military have pulled them back because of such an allegation.

Now, the issue is the tribunal, because as you know it is the military tribunals that are in charge of judging them when they come back. This is where the UN or the AU come in: how do we now make sure that they face justice when they come back? In some cases it has happened; some militaries have put tribunals in place to judge, so that when you come back you are dismissed; or, depending on the allegation, you are dismissed for months or you are completely dismissed from the army. That is where we are saying that accountability needs to come in. We need to monitor up to when they are sent back to make sure that that happens. We should not leave it to the Member States that have sent the troops to make the judgment. Sometimes we know that the military can be a “silent house”, as we say, in that they do not communicate what is happening outside. So we need to monitor what armies do when they send peacekeepers back, whether that is at the UN and whether it is Indian troops, Afghan troops or any troops that are sent on the ground. When they are sent back, we need to see how they are prosecuted by the army.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: Could I just pursue one aspect of what you have just said? Would you be prepared to say that the UN could and should refuse to waive immunity for the enforcement of prosecution?

Madame Bineta Diop: Yes. Immunity cannot be waived, because at the end of the day the conflict will come back if we do not address the causes or the consequences. If the women do not see justice or reparation, and if the perpetrators are free, we are promoting the injustice that we need to fight against. So the UN has to make sure not only that those who perpetrate violence are brought to justice but that we do not give them any immunity or protection. Even in our report on South Sudan, we need to say that nobody, no politician, will be protected and given immunity. It is now up to the politicians and the UN to adopt the appropriate framework to make sure that there is a judgment, because that is what the women are demanding. You know that my role is to set out what the women are saying. It is not what the AU is saying; we set out what the victims are telling us they need to be done, and what we need to do to prepare for reparations and justice to be done for them.

Q84 Baroness Young of Hornsey: Thank you very much, Madame Diop, for your contributions this morning. I particularly like your approach, which, as you say, is that you are representing and giving voice to the women so that the AU can act and press for more action.

What sanctions do you think the AU can bring to bear against the perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict? I want to link this back to your final report, which you spoke about earlier, by the Commission for Inquiry on South Sudan, and the recommendation of the establishment of an African legal mechanism under the aegis of the African Union to prosecute those who bear the greatest responsibility, no matter how high up the chain of command that might be—even to State level. Can you say something about what sanctions and legal instruments can be brought to bear on high-level perpetrators of violence or those who condone that violence by taking insufficient action?

Madame Bineta Diop: It is very clear in our reports, and it must be. It was our mandate to do due diligence, and we have done our job as members of the Commission of Inquiry. We

did not hide anything. What we saw on the ground is what we put in our report. It was an independent report. I made sure that I had a gender expert with me, who was put in place by UN Women; we had a joint commission with UN Women, and they deployed personnel for us. African personnel who had retired from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights also accompanied us when we looked into evidence and so on. So it was a priority for us and at the heart of our investigation, and this is what you find in the report.

Our report also refers to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in terms of the AU, because that court exists right now and informs my view. It needs to be empowered enough and supported to make sure that it can also address some of those issues. You might remember that, in the case of Rwanda, gender-based violence was addressed in the tribunal in Arusha. So in this report, we propose a court that can address these issues, including gender-based violence.

The two parties to the conflict have accepted the idea of a court, and this is in the agreement. The whole issue now is how we implement that agreement. This question is not just for the AU or IGAD but for the international community. All of us around the table need to exert pressure in order that such a court exists and can address these issues.

So the work on the ground has been done. We have ample evidence, and we have the agreement of the parties who have signed the agreement. Now we need implementation. Most of the time issues are put on paper, but when it comes to implementation it lags behind. We need money and resources, or it is not a priority. We all need to advocate having a court, as we do in the report which the AU has issued on sexual abuse in conflict.

Baroness Young of Hornsey: You went down this route rather than making referrals to the International Criminal Court. Can you say something about why that decision was made?

Madame Bineta Diop: Did you say the ICC?

Baroness Young of Hornsey: Sorry, it is difficult to hear you.

Madame Bineta Diop: Can you repeat your question?

Baroness Young of Hornsey: The Commission decided to set up this particular approach, rather than referring to the ICC. Can you say something about why that decision was made?

Madame Bineta Diop: The call for jurisdiction is in our report. Of course, the ICC is another way of addressing it, but when you are looking into doing it better you might start at home. That is something that we also put in the report: that there is a need to reform the judicial process at a national level, because not everybody can go to the ICC. You need to address it at the national level, at the regional level, and at the international level where the need arises. In our case, we looked into the national and the regional levels, but if there is the need to go to the ICC and justice is not done, something will happen. Either it is at those levels or at the ICC, but our starting point was the need to look at mass violation, because the perpetrators are many and we need to judge them on the ground, as they did in Rwanda; there was the Gacaca court, they have national courts and they have the tribunal in Arusha. So we need to look into all the systems that exists. We are not saying that the ICC, as an independent court, is not relevant; we are just saying, "Let's do it this way", and as Africans we start in our African courts. "Can we do it like before?" We were able to do that, and we are now doing this in Senegal. So there is the possibility to do that and to empower our judicial system, and where it is not working we need to address that.

You know that the ICC is as we promoted, because African Member States are the majority of the signatories to the Rome statutes. There are international countries that have not signed up to the Rome statutes. I can also tell you that the majority of Member States that have been meeting to talk about the ICC say, “Why is the ICC just addressing us, not the others?”. That is the feeling that I got from people. Coming from civil society, my background has been in pushing against impunity and in bringing the perpetrators to justice. That has been my battle all my life. As I say, the Member States are saying, “The ICC is there, but it is only addressing us”. Our own report is looking at the national and the regional, but why not the international?

Q85 Baroness Hilton of Eggardon: Madame Diop, to continue with the difficulty of mounting prosecutions or dealing with the perpetrators of these offences, one of the problems is collecting evidence. As you know, a protocol, which in my view is rather elaborate, has been produced, about interviewing witnesses and recording their statements. Do you know to what extent it has been useful or has been used in an attempt to prosecute offenders?

Madame Bineta Diop: In my own office, being aware of the protocol has really helped to raise awareness in my own area. But I also have to emphasise that we have the peace and security architecture, a whole architecture that comes from military peacekeeping and goes through mediation, so there is a provision on peace and security. So we have a huge range of areas where the protocol has to be used. My role is really to promote such a protocol, not to implement it. I am not an implementer but an adviser. My role is advisory, and in this conversation I am not representing the African Union, because there is a Commission of the African Union and a Commissioner who is in charge of peace and security. My mandate as a Special Envoy is to raise women’s voices and bring forward women’s issues, so I cannot tell you what the Member States in the Peace and Security Council think—I am not a Member State. I am not even an official paid employee of the AU Commission, so my role is really that of a Special Envoy to make sure that I can share this issue that we share. When I listen to you and to the women, I say, “This needs to be done”. My role is to monitor whether it is done and to tell them if it is not done, and I highlight whether it is done or not done through the chairperson of the African Union. The Commissioner is in charge of peace and security. I am not in charge of peace and security; I am in charge of advising the necessary person, who is the chairperson of the African Union. I use the framework and ask people to read it and make sure that we train the staff on that, especially those who have been employed, but I am not the implementer, so I cannot tell you how much it is implemented right now. My role is to make sure that it is given to them and that it is in the training and policy.

The Chairman: I have a couple of short questions that come from your answers, Madame Diop. The first is: what about men and boys, who also get assaulted sexually when there is conflict? Can you advise the Secretary-General on that as well?

Madame Bineta Diop: There is a growing evidence that boys are also assaulted. In the case of the Central African Republic it is obvious; the evidence has showed that. We need to engage the UN by saying that it is not only a gender issue. It has become a gender issue. Of course the majority of victims are women, but we need to make sure that we can address the issue of young boys who have been assaulted as gender-based violence as well. The Secretary-General’s investigation in the Central African Republic will result in a report, and he will make sure that it will address this, and I think that Zainab Bangura’s mandate will also

look into this. By implementing the policies and the framework she is making sure that we address the case of boys who are also victims.

Q86 The Chairman: Thank you. You told us that you have been witnessing discussions with women who had been assaulted in the areas and villages where that had happened. How in such a case do you try to protect the women as they give their evidence, and afterwards? What about safe zones for citizens? Is there any way in which the African Union can offer us guidance and advice on that?

Madame Bineta Diop: We need more peace centres. We need spaces where you can meet the women, where there can be discussions among them, and where they can be protected and empowered. When UN Women, Madame Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and I visited the Central African Republic, one of our proposals was to make sure that we have those centres—safe spaces for women so that they can give their testimonies and they are not identified. For example, when I held discussions there, took evidence from them and interviewed them, we gave no names and made sure that we disguised their faces. They need that space. That is why Madame Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women and I have been looking into how we promote that. One of the projects of UN Women in CAR is to create safe places for women. We have seen that it in some places such as the DRC, where there are centres for women. Perhaps the UK can also support this, even within peacekeeping operations.

When women are whistleblowers, if you give them the instruments they can be safe and anonymous and can declare, for example, “My fellows in the military have abused me”—because that has also happened. That is why we are putting this system in place for whistleblowers, which I think has helped. In that kind of space for women, they can share, and that is what I do: when I go there I create a safe space where we sit, talk and discuss and they share with each other. We bring counsellors to them, because afterwards they need to have trauma counselling. Then we make sure that we follow through with them and that they are protected afterwards. So those safe spaces need to be duplicated in communities as well. Even those who have not been abused need to be part of the process so that they can be part of the caring and so that the community needs of the survivors can be met.

The Chairman: Madame Diop, on the victims who cannot be anonymous, which is an enormous number, does the African Union have advice on how those women might even be welcomed back into their communities rather than stigmatised and continually pushed out? Do you have any policies and guidance on that?

Madame Bineta Diop: As you know, we started with the UN, and I started by saying that the UN is in charge of the peace and security of the world. When we are implementing Resolution 1325, which is now a good instrument for the African Union, we are also looking at sharing the UN’s experience—what has happened within the UN—so that we can learn from the process and learn from where we are integrating well, such as giving economic empowerment back to the community.

We have a project and a fund that is post-conflict and that aims to support women to go back. In the Central African Republic, for example, we are training women in agriculture and are looking into training them in civic education so that they can become part and parcel of the community and can exercise their citizens’ right to come back into the community and to vote. In the Central African Republic, where I was last week, we trained the women for a

coalition and to exercise their citizenship so that when we come to an election they can be elected. Why not? There were some candidates, some victims and some politicians in the room. You need to help them to reintegrate into society. For example, there is an African Union fund to look into training, and with UN Women we are looking into agriculture. In the majority of those countries, women are saying, “We want to go back to the fields, because we need to feed our family, feed our children and bring them back to school, and we need to build health centres”. So they go out. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, for example, young ex-combatants were integrated back into the community and space was provided for the women to give them economic and political empowerment to integrate into society. Yes, the AU has such a fund, but it is small, and it needs to be replicated and amplified.

Q87 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: Madame Diop, thank you very much for everything that you have shared with us this morning. Some of us in this room are visiting the DRC on Thursday. What progress, if any, can we expect to see? I have visited the country quite a few times, and it is my understanding that I will probably not see or experience great changes in the DRC as far as the issues that we have been discussing today are concerned. Also, I was always a great supporter of the initiatives of Margot Wallström, who, as you know, worked on these issues in the DRC and focused only on them, although she has now left that job, as well as a supporter of Mary Robinson, who, as I understand it, is no longer playing that role in the DRC. Is there any likelihood that further appointments will be made and that someone of their ilk and experience will be able to go there to assess what is happening?

Madame Bineta Diop: On the issue of the DRC, when I visited London last time I met the Special Representative of the President of the country on the issue of sexual violence and abuse. The lady visited London and met government officials and others, but since she was appointed a general has been accused and also detained, if my information is right. So I think the government has been taking this seriously thanks to international pressure—from the EU, Zainab Bangura, Margot Wallström. All of us have been pushing the government, as well as the UN forces, to take tremendous steps to make sure that they address the protection of civilians as well.

We worked with Mary Robinson—I was not Special Envoy at that time, as I explained—in the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda to put a platform in place for women, which still exists. In fact, we are calling a meeting next week of the board of the platform. We are meeting Said Djinnit, who has replaced Mary Robinson and has taken very seriously the need to make sure that the voices of women are heard within the accord. One of the things that Mary started was the creation of a fund for women that will address the reconstruction of the mind and the body as well as the economic. It is hosted by the Global Fund for Women, which is in the States. The funds are there, and it distributes the resources to the NGOs and civil society on the ground in the DRC. So we are making sure that what Mary put in place is continuing. Now, with my Special Envoy hat on, I am also pushing this within the AU, so that the legacy that Mary left continues as well, because we designed it together. We were at meeting at Burundi, and we have been working closely together with Margot Wallström as well. As a member of Femmes Africa Solidarité I invited Margot to one of its meeting in Uganda, and we made sure that she had a platform herself to address the Member States and make sure that they heard what Margot had to say.

So my work is to continue all our work, on international and regional levels, because we created our big women’s network to make sure that we facilitate that process. Now my job

is to make sure that that process does not stop. We can say that the chair of the African Union, Madame Zuma, who we all know, takes these issues and the priorities of her own mandate seriously. She has made sure that this year is the year of women's empowerment and that we look into all sectors of women's empowerment. She is looking at good initiatives to promote, and next year, 2016, is the year of women's human rights. We have women's champions. We have male champions too, but also women's champions such as the chairperson, Margot Wallström, and Mary Robinson, who are the friends of Africa who have been supporting our work on the ground.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: Thank you.

Q88 The Chairman: Madame Diop, I have a final question for you, and on behalf of the Committee I would like to say thank you very much for all that you have given us. What could we propose that would assist you in your work? What could the UK Government do that we could recommend, and what do you see other States doing that we could also suggest should be investigated and carried forward? How would you like us to recommend materials, tools or protocols that would support and enhance the amazing work that you are doing?

Madame Bineta Diop: Thank you for this important question. I need to get your support for implementation. As we celebrate 15 years of Resolution 1325, we still see huge gaps in implementation, at government and local level and even in civil society. So the first thing for me is to make sure that we have a framework for monitoring within the African Union. Of course, we do not need any more declarations or resolutions; rather, we need people to talk about how we implement, what resources we have in the African Union and the region to implement, and how we can access the UN resources to make sure that they are implemented right.

For me, the first thing is to empower African women. There is a political will in the commission—the chairperson and the Commissioner are very much behind this—so we need to have a framework that monitors what happens on the ground. That may be through the participation of women in mediation. For example, we are training women right now in the AU with rosters with Member States such as South Africa and others to support women to be part of mediation. So we need to make sure that the Member States are involved. Last time, Sweden and Norway and other countries said that they would support capacity-building for women mediators. We need to track those things when it comes to participation.

When it comes to protection, we need to make sure that we look into the laws and the framework that exist. We need to look at countries that have friendly police officers who can investigate and help civilians and women, and we need to look at which are implementing best practices and solutions.

In terms of Resolution 1325 and other protocols, we know that there is no way we can say that we are preventing violence and so on. We do not prevent enough, even with the support of the international community. We have early warning systems, for example in politics, when it comes to elections and we see violence, and so on. However, we need to make sure that we are preventing as well. This framework for monitoring will help us to produce an annual report with clear indicators so that we can track and measure the

solutions that have been applied. If we track the indicators, we will know it has been applied and where it has not been applied.

Lastly, there is the issue of resources and capacity-building for women's groups. The African Union has to do more, but the international community says that there is no more money for peace and security. Wherever I work the women say, "We don't have money". We need to empower the women's groups that are monitoring what happens on the ground and who can provide alternative solutions. Right now, no money is to be found anywhere. This would be a huge help. We need implementation and to give all actors, including civil society, the capacity.

The Chairman: Madame Diop, thank you very much indeed. We in this Committee support and thank you, and congratulate you on your wonderful work. I can see that everyone is hugely grateful to you and vastly impressed by the enormous amount of achievement you have already managed. Thank you for joining us, and if we may we will put forward a few more written questions, as we have not quite got through everything. We have taken up a lot of your time. We thank you very much indeed and look forward immensely to continuing this co-operation. Thank you very much.

Madame Bineta Diop: Thank you so much for this conversation. I am also thankful for the last EU summit, when William Hague and Angelina Jolie highlighted decisions for Member States. They will continue with this advocacy as well. My office will be very glad to provide more answers to questions. This was a wonderful discussion, which I appreciate, and I thank you for listening.

The Chairman: Thank you.