Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UK to contribute to ICC trust fund for victims of sexual violence

2013-02-12

Speaking at a reception for G8 countries and organisations working on combating sexual violence in London, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK will contribute £500,000 to the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims. The Foreign Secretary said:

"Good evening and welcome to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

I am delighted that you accepted our invitation to attend this event, whether as representatives of G8 countries, experts in the field of preventing sexual violence in conflict, or Parliamentarians with a longstanding interest in this area.

I believe we all share a common aim. We all want the world to succeed in agreeing new practical action to prevent and one day end sexual violence in conflict.

And I also hope we share a similar sense of optimism. Because so much has been done to raise awareness of the consequences of the use of rape as a weapon of war in recent years, there is a greater hope of achieving that goal today than at any time before.

We should take heart from the fact that the world has overcome seemingly intractable problems before, ranging from the Atlantic slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries to our efforts today to adopt an International Arms Trade Treaty. Today, stopping rape and sexual violence in war is a new moral and practical cause for our generation. The time has come to take this forward.

The UN and many NGOs have shown the way and developed our understanding of these issues. It is now for governments to back their efforts in a coordinated fashion.

If the G8 – some of the most powerful nations in the world – can agree to take action, then we have every chance of carrying the rest of the world with us and of making a difference to the lives of many vulnerable people.

Of course, it is the primary responsibility of individual states to protect their citizens. But countries struggling with conflict or the aftermath of conflict can only do this with the help of the international community. To my mind that help cannot come too soon for the thousands of

vulnerable women, children and men being subjected to sexual violence in Syria today, or those still living with the legacy of rape in many countries.

The United Nations has repeatedly condemned all forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and called for these to end. But far from coming to an end, these acts continue to occur and in some situations have become more systematic or widespread.

We will only reverse this trend when the perpetrators of rape desist because the international community has shown an unshakeable resolve to hold them to account, when survivors feel able to come forward because they trust that they will be cared for and protected over the long term; when human rights defenders receive greater support in their work to uncover violations worldwide; and when women's needs and rights are fully incorporated into peacekeeping, peace settlements and the recovery from conflict.

I hope that because the consequences of sexual violence in conflict are so grave, so damaging to the fabric of those societies, and have such a profound impact on international peace and security, that we the G8 will be able unite around sensible and comprehensive action and that then, together, we can persuade other nations to join us as well.

That hope lies at the heart of the proposals we have put forward, after much consultation with our partners, and which you have begun to discuss in some detail today.

We have just under two months to see if it is possible to reach agreement on these proposals which we hope can be adopted when the G8 Foreign Ministers meet in here London on April 10th.

We will be asking G8 nations to declare that rape and serious sexual violence amount to "grave breaches" of the Geneva Conventions, to signal that we are prepared to pursue domestic prosecution of such crimes on the basis of universal jurisdiction.

In addition, we are proposing a set of practical commitments to overcome barriers to successful prosecution for sexual violence in conflict and greater support to victims and human rights defenders.

These barriers are first, the poor quality of investigation and documentation of incidents of sexual violence in conflict. We are calling on the G8 to endorse a new International Protocol on the investigation and documentation of sexual violence, aimed at leading to an increase in successful prosecutions.

The second barrier is inadequate support and assistance to survivors. This support to victims is crucial in the fight against impunity. I am pleased to announce today that the United Kingdom will contributing a further £500,000 to the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims, which is helping the victims of sexual and gender based violence to rebuild their

lives. This follows two previous contributions of £500,000 that we made in the last two years, bringing our total contribution to £1.5m. I call upon our G8 colleagues to consider providing their support to the Trust Fund, and similar initiatives, as a means of helping survivors rebuild their lives and really attain justice for what they have endured.

The third barrier is the failure of wider peace and security efforts to address sexual violence. We need to ensure that the response to sexual and gender based violence is fully integrated into wider peace and security efforts.

And finally, we need to improve international coordination, including through the UN, since a cooperative and burden-sharing approach this issue would have a much greater impact.

All these proposals have in common that they are aimed at shattering the culture of impunity for those who use rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war; that they will enable us all to provide better care for survivors, bring more perpetrators to justice, and increase the legal and practical capabilities of other nations; and that they support the shifting of the stigma of rape from the survivors of these crimes to the perpetrators. And they have all been developed on the basis of extensive consultation with G8 partners, other nations, UN agencies, other international organisations, experts and NGOs.

We believe that their adoption by the G8 could be the start of a major new international effort, in which we would work with you in asking other nations of the world to make similar commitments. We are prepared to use the UK's Presidency of the UN Security Council in June to take that forward, and to make it a focus of our diplomacy at the UN General Assembly in September.

On top of this, the new UK team of experts in preventing sexual violence will deploy to at least six countries this year: the Syrian border, Libya South Sudan, the Eastern DRC, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and – as I announced two weeks ago – to Mali as part of the EU military training mission that has now been established there.

So my personal message to you tonight, and the one that I hope you will take back to your capitals, is that the United Kingdom believes that the time is right for the world to make a breakthrough in confronting sexual violence in war, and that if we as the G8 can adopt these proposals we will be part of an effort that we can all look back on with pride. I hope that our nations can make common cause, for in doing so we not only do the right thing by every survivor of sexual violence in war and those living under its shadow today, but we will also support our own long term peace and security."

Foreign Secretary William Hague speaking a G8 Preventing Sexual Violence experts meeting in London, 12 February 2013.

Further Information

Read more about the

ICC

’s Trust Fund for Victims

More information on the UK’s

team of experts working on preventing sexual violence in conflict situations

Read more about the

UK’s Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative.

Read more about the

UK’s contribution to the

ICC

Trust Fund for Victims

More information about the

UK Presidency of the G8

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uk-to-contribute-to-icc-trust-fund-for-victims-of-sexual-violence