



8 February 2014 - The United Nations and the African Union (AU) have affirmed their common commitment “to put an end to history’s oldest and least condemned crime” by signing landmark agreement on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Africa.

“All good forces must work together to combat the horrible scourge of sexual violence in war and conflict,” said the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, who co-signed the document with Ambassador Smaïl Chergui, of Algeria, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union.

The agreement focuses on key areas, such as combating impunity for perpetrators, capacity building and training to enhance the capacity of peacekeepers and security actors. It also strengthens national policies, legislation and institutions working on conflict-related sexual violence.



“National ownership, leadership and responsibility are absolutely essential if we are to protect women and girls, but also men and boys, from these barbaric crimes,” Ms. Bangura said. “I am confident that this framework of cooperation will help us in this fight.”

The agreement also emphasizes the importance of services for survivors, empowering women and girls, and countering the stigma of survivors. The document was signed on 31 January, the final day of the 22nd African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Outlining her steps forward, Ms. Bangura said ending impunity, empowering women and committing political will were key. “We’re trying to make sure there is cohesion within the UN, so that we harmonize our response,” she said. “A solution cannot be imposed from above.”

Rape is often both a tactic and a consequence of conflict. During his [recent visit](#) to Brussels, Mr. Mabingue Ngom, UNFPA’s Programme Division Director, said he feared that the number of victims of sexual violence in the Central African Republic (CAR) is “astronomical”, as they, during the month before his visit, had 1186 confirmed cases of sexual violence.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been dubbed the rape capital of the world.

The United Nations says more than 200,000 people have been raped in the country since 1998. It constitutes a weapon of war that largely goes unpunished in the [eastern DRC](#). The United Nations has urged the the DR Congo government to prosecute soldiers for dozens of sexual assaults committed against women last year in the country's east.

*UNRIC's related links:*

*Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence - An Analytical Inventory of Peacekeeping Practice (Second Edition, October 2012) <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/en/04DAnAnalyticalInventoryofPeacekeepingPracti.pdf>*

*UN Women Watch: Violence Against Women <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence>*

*Latest Report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence: <http://undocs.org/S/2013/149>*

*Special representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict:* <http://www.stoprapenow.org/>

*Library backgrounder on protection of civilians under armed conflict:* <http://unric.org/en/unric-library/26575>