

## **Sexual violence – Model pledges**

### **Model pledges for national authorities**

Conference participants could make pledges on the following issues:

#### ***Protection: Policy, legal and regulatory measures***

- Adopt a comprehensive and multidisciplinary policy on sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies that encompasses preventive action, risk reduction and protection strategies, including in detention settings. Such a policy should address the causes and consequences of sexual violence and incorporate timely medical and psychosocial support for victims and initiatives that foster victims' reintegration into society.
- Legislate for the absolute prohibition of sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies and ensure that: a gender-neutral definition covering all potential perpetrators (regardless of their status and their victims) is included; all forms of participation are properly covered; no amnesty, pardon or similar measure is admissible; all relevant bases of jurisdiction are provided for, including universal jurisdiction; and no defence based on obedience to a superior's order is possible.
- Enact domestic legislation providing for effective repression of sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies, accompanied by truly dissuasive sanctions.
- Enact or amend witness protection legislation to include protective measures for victims and witnesses of sexual violence, paying particular attention to their consent, confidentiality and right to privacy.
- Protect health workers, human rights defenders and activists and local non-governmental organizations working towards the prevention of, and response to, sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies, and ensure that they are able to work in safety and security.

#### ***Capacity building***

- Organize specific training for the judiciary on sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies, with particular attention given to the protection of victims and the gathering of evidence.
- Take positive measures to ensure the inclusion of more women at professional levels in the judicial sector.
- Commit to investing in specialized prosecution units and special chambers within criminal tribunals.
- Organize training for law-enforcement officials and first responders on preventing, reducing the risk of and handling cases of sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies.
- Conduct specialized professional training for police and prosecutorial staff on the handling of cases of sexual violence, with particular emphasis on the gathering of evidence (including forensic evidence) in armed conflict and other emergencies.
- Support other national authorities in their efforts to bring law and practice into line with international standards on addressing sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies.

#### ***Data gathering***

- Systematize data collection, including in detention settings, to strengthen the evidence base delineating the scope, extent and nature of sexual violence in armed conflict and

other emergencies, with a view to measuring the effectiveness of policies and programmes to prevent all forms of sexual violence in such contexts.

### **Prevention**

- Implement initiatives to encourage political leaders, policy-makers and decision-takers at the national and local levels, including traditional leaders and religious leaders, to play a more active role in sensitizing communities to sexual violence in order to avoid marginalization and stigmatization of victims, to assist with their social reintegration and to combat a culture of impunity for these crimes.
- Conduct training for State armed forces and other weapon bearers on the categorical prohibition of all forms of sexual violence in all circumstances, and adopt a zero-tolerance policy on the issue.
- Conduct pre-deployment and in-theatre training on sexual violence for State armed forces and other weapon bearers, with particular focus on risk reduction and protection measures.
- Ensure full accountability of State armed forces and other weapon bearers, including their superiors, in all cases of sexual violence involving their personnel.
- Issue clear orders prohibiting all forms of sexual violence, and integrate such prohibitions in relevant doctrine (codes of conduct, military field manuals, standardized rules of engagement, and standard operating procedures for detention operations).
- Enforce appropriate disciplinary measures and reporting requirements in relation to all incidents of sexual violence in armed conflicts and other emergencies.

### **Access to justice**

- Take practical steps to ensure victims' access to justice by creating an enabling environment where victims can easily report incidents of violence and by ensuring, *inter alia*, that witness protection is respectful of their needs and those of their families and protects their right to confidentiality and privacy.
- Strengthen medical services, including forensics, in order to facilitate the provision of medical certificates and evidence required for the timely hearing of cases relating to sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies.
- Undertake to eliminate all impediments to prosecution by, *inter alia*, permitting prosecution of marital rape and repealing provisions that require corroboration of testimony or subject victims of sexual violence to prosecution for moral crimes of defamation.

### **Health**

- Ensure unimpeded access to non-discriminatory and comprehensive health-care services.
- Address the long-term consequences of sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies, including discrimination and stigmatization, as well as the effects on children born as a result of rape or who witness such violence.

### **Model pledges for National Societies**

- Support the development and strengthening of the capacities of national institutions, in particular of judicial and specialized health systems, and of local civil society networks, including grass-roots structures, in order to boost risk reduction and provide

sustainable assistance and protection to victims of sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies.

- Invest in training local experts, including psychosocial experts, and raising public awareness in order to mitigate stigmatization and strengthen the resilience of victims of sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies.
- Support other national authorities in their efforts to bring their law and practice into line with international standards on addressing sexual violence in armed conflict and other emergencies.
- Conduct training sessions for staff, volunteers and other humanitarian actors on the categorical prohibition of rape and other forms of sexual violence in all circumstances, and adopt a zero-tolerance policy on this issue.