Background and Introduction

In 1999, the UN Security Council formally recognised the protection of civilians in armed conflict (PoC) as a matter of international peace and security in resolution 1265. Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is closely linked to the PoC agenda of the Security Council aiming to minimize civilian harm in armed-conflict settings, including the risk of sexual violence against women, men, girls, and boys.

According to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC), CRSV refers to rape, sexual slavery and mutilation, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriage, trafficking in persons when committed in situations of conflict for the purpose of sexual violence/exploitation and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. The international community is guided by a strong normative, legal framework to prevent and respond to CRSV as derived from Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2331 (2016), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019). Additionally, Articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute explicitly outlaw rape, sexual slavery (including trafficking in persons, particularly women and children), enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity as crimes against humanity and war crimes. International human rights law also requires States to exercise due diligence in prevention, investigation, and reparation of acts of sexual violence in conflict, for instance, Articles. 19(1) and 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Articles 1-3 of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, and Articles 3(4), 4(2), 11(3), 12(1)(c)(d), 13(c), 14(2)(c), 22(b), 23 (b) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights of Women in Africa, 2003 (Maputo Protocol).

The Security Council has increasingly recognised that the main way to protect civilians, particularly women and girls who are most vulnerable to the crime of sexual violence in conflict settings, is through bolstering prevention mechanisms and activities to stop CRSV from happening in the first place. ‘Prevention of CRSV’ has thus been recognised as a fundamental way to stop the perpetration of these international crimes, and to avoid horrific, long-term consequences for survivors, their families, and communities. Prevention efforts, which often refer to addressing root causes of CRSV such as gender inequality, discrimination, and
patriarchal social structures and risk mitigation, must include those taken at both the grassroots- and global-arenas through international advocacy with conflict parties and Member States, and peacebuilding initiatives that seek to prevent conflict and its relapse. Prevention cannot be undertaken without ensuring access to and availability of survivor-centred response services, including medical, psychosocial, and legal responses. National and local level prevention strategies are far more likely to be effective when they are developed, implemented and monitored in partnership with grassroots women’s organisations that are already working with survivors or groups at risk of CRSV, and when these organisations are resourced to provide survivor-centred prevention and response services on an ongoing basis.

Co-Hosts

**UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action)** is a network comprised of 21 UN entities, it is the only forum that brings together the collective experience and expertise of the entire UN system to prevent and respond to CRSV using a survivor-centred approach. **UN Action’s projects and initiatives are supported through the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence – Multi-Partner Trust Fund (CRSV-MPTF)**, with voluntary, pooled contributions and in-kind support. As an operating arm of the CRSV mandate held by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC), UN Action contributes to the advocacy of a system-wide approach to preventing and responding to CRSV through a survivor-centred approach. Among the 21 member entities, **OHCHR, UN Women, and OCHA**, with the support of the UN Action Secretariat, lead the organisation of this event.

**CARE International** is an independent humanitarian and development organization delivering programs in over 100 countries worldwide. We work with partners and marginalized communities, women and girls, to influence change that positively impacts their lives, responding to their priorities. CARE’s vision of a world without poverty and social injustice compels us to work toward eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) and ensuring everyone enjoys life free from violence. Addressing GBV is a core tenant of CARE’s four-part Gender in Emergencies approach and is central to upholding CARE’s humanitarian mandate to protect the rights of marginalized groups. Through our programs, we seek to address the power inequalities between women and men, girls and boys, and people of all genders that underpin GBV. We do this by focusing on: strengthening individual voice; creating healthy relationships; changing social norms; and building accountability. CARE also seeks to integrate GBV risk mitigation measures across all sectors in our humanitarian programming.

**The Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations in New York**

**The Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York**

**The Permanent Mission of the United States of America in New York**

**Proposed Event**

UN Action, the Permanent Mission of Spain to the UN, the Permanent Mission of France, the Permanent Mission of the United States of America, and CARE International wish to jointly host a side-event during the Protection of Civilians week on the subject of, ‘Protection through Prevention: Best Practices to meet the needs of Survivors of CRSV’. By hosting an event specifically focused on the intersections between the Protection of Civilians and CRSV mandates, the hosts hope to raise awareness on the

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1 The other being the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict
relationship between the two and highlight how a preventative approach to CRSV could also strengthen the fulfillment of obligations under the protection of civilians’ mandate in conflict-affected settings.

The moderated, interactive panel will bring together experts from Headquarters, including Member States and policymakers, and the field, from civil society organizations to UN practitioners, across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus to demonstrate the dire need for action, from political will to financing, to respond to conflicts across the globe. It will also highlight some of the promising practices developed so far that have had a significant impact on the prevention of CRSV.

**Objectives and Expected Outcomes of the Event**

The **overall objective** of the event is to raise awareness and share best practices on how the prevention of CRSV is an effective form of protecting civilians.

The **expected outcomes are**:

- Participants are better informed of the CRSV mandate and its link with the PoC agenda of the Security Council
- Member States, civil society organisations, and UN entities share experiences and contribute to the collective knowledge building on the nexus between CRSV and Protection of Civilians
- Survivors or those working to deliver a survivor-centred approach at the local level share their reflections on the CRSV mandate and what is needed to make the transition to protection through prevention
- Policy makers and practitioners are attuned to promising practices on preventing CRSV, which inform the elaboration of relevant policies (e.g. UN Action Network prevention work)

**Proposed Structure**

Total Length: 1 hour
Format: Virtual