

**Statement by EU Ambassador H.E. Pelle Enarsson at the Advocacy event marking the launch of the campaign commemorating the international day for the elimination of sexual violence in conflict, Juba, 19 June 2026, organized by the Centre for Inclusive Governance, Peace and Justice in collaboration with Dr Denis Mukwege Foundation, Legal Action Worldwide and Survivors Network in South Sudan**

Excellencies, survivor leaders, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we reaffirm some simple truths: conflict-related sexual violence is never inevitable, never acceptable, and never beyond accountability. It is a grave violation of human rights and international humanitarian law and may amount to a war crime or crime against humanity.

In South Sudan, decades of conflict and limited access to data make it difficult to fully understand the number of survivors affected. At the same time, many survivors still struggle to access even the most basic services and support. Survivors must not carry the burden of stigma. That burden belongs to perpetrators. In South Sudan, conflict-related sexual violence has devastated the lives of thousands of women and children.

Survivors must be at the centre of our response. This means access to protection, health care, psychosocial support, and justice services. It also means listening to survivors, supporting women's organisations and survivor-led networks, and ensuring that women and girls — including mothers and children born of war — are not left behind. There can be no sustainable peace without justice, and no justice if survivors are silenced.

Addressing conflict-related sexual violence must be part of wider efforts on peace, reconciliation, accountability, and non-recurrence. Women's full and meaningful participation in public life, peace processes, and decision-making is essential.

The European Union stands with the survivors of sexual violence in South Sudan. Our support is guided by dignity, survivor-centred action, women's participation, and accountability. We remain committed to strengthening protection, promoting women's leadership, and mainstreaming gender across our programmes.

Globally, the EU advances this commitment through the EU Gender Action Plan III and the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. In South Sudan, we apply a gender-mainstreamed approach across our programmes. Through our in-country project 8MEUR, "Prevention of Sexualised and Gender-Based

Violence in South Sudan (ResPEct)”, co-financed by BMZ and implemented by GIZ, we support both state and non-state actors in preventing sexual and gender-based violence. The project helps expand access to counselling services, promotes gender equality and peaceful conflict resolution within families, and strengthens women’s groups and organisations working to prevent SGBV. We also support women’s rights organisations and global initiatives for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

Let us renew our commitment to listen to survivors, support survivor-led action, strengthen accountability, and work together for justice and non-recurrence.

Finally, let me make a short personal reflection. A few years back, I had the opportunity to meet Dr Denis Mukwege when he passed by Stockholm to be rewarded the Nobel Peace Prize. I was moved by his drive and commitment to end sexual violence in conflict. As an individual, he was an amazing leader for a cause. Even as we celebrate collective action here today, I want to recognize your own individual leadership and bravery to end the curse of sexual violence here in South Sudan.

Thank you.