Prevention and settlement of armed conflicts: gender-related aspects

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The committee adopted the report by Maj Britt THEORIN (PES, S) on the participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution. The report began by condemning systematic rape, forced impregnation, sexual slavery and all other forms of gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict. The Member States were urged to take steps to revise the Fourth Geneva Protocol so that such acts would be deemed serious breaches of the Geneva Conventions and to ratify the Treaty of Rome authorising an International Criminal Court, which formally recognised rape, forced impregnation and sexual slavery as crimes against humanity and war crimes. The report called for funding to be made available so that victims of rape and assault in war-torn regions could receive psychological counselling and have the choice between terminating a pregnancy or giving birth discreetly. Under specific conditions, asylum should be granted to women who had been raped or suffered sexual violence during armed conflict. The committee called for peace and security related initiatives to be "gender sensitised". It condemned the sexual misconduct of European soldiers involved in peacekeeping operations and called for all military personnel and, specifically, peacekeeping personnel to be given thorough gender training and for magistrates and human rights observers to accompany peacekeepers to ensure that international law was upheld. When planning refugee camps, a gender perspective should also be taken into account in order to protect refugee women from sexual abuse and ensure that they enjoyed equal representation in committees and other decision-making bodies in refugee camps. The report stressed that current conflicts demanded the increased use of non-military crisis management. New non-military skills were required of peacekeepers, resulting in enhanced opportunities for women. The committee urged that 40% of all peacekeeping, fact-finding and observer missions should be made up of women. Women should participate fully in the official conflict resolution process, taking part in peace negotiation teams, and gender inequalities and repercussions should be discussed systematically in each area of negotiation. Lastly, the committee emphasised that women, who often had a crucial role in the rebuilding of their societies, should not be marginalised by inappropriate demobilisation and reconstruction initiatives.