



Security Council

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Letter dated 16 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Dr. Denis Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate; Ms. Caroline Atim, Director of South Sudan Women with Disabilities Network; and Ms. Beatrix Attinger Colijn, Senior Women Protection Adviser at the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on “Women and peace and security: sexual violence in conflict”, convened on Wednesday, 14 April 2021.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members for this video-teleconference, the following delegations and entities submitted written statements, copies of which are also enclosed: Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, the European Union, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, the Netherlands, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, as well as a statement by Argentina and the Netherlands.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Dang Dinh Quy**
President of the Security Council



Annex 1

Briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten

Today's meeting is a critical opportunity to take stock of persistent and entrenched, as well as new and emerging, challenges in our collective efforts to eradicate the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence. Building on our debate last year (see S/2020/727), which focused on turning commitments into compliance and pursuing a survivor-centred, rights-based approach in all prevention and response efforts, we now meet to assess and address the gaps that remain. Many of those gaps and challenges have been exacerbated over the past year by a pandemic that has arrested the attention of the world. Concerted efforts are needed to ensure that survivors of sexual violence are not obscured beneath the long shadow cast by this unprecedented crisis.

In that respect, I would like to sincerely appreciate the leadership of Viet Nam for convening this debate, which shines a spotlight on the issue during dark and difficult times. I warmly welcome the civil society briefer from South Sudan, our Senior Women Protection Adviser from the Central African Republic and Nobel Laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege, whose first-hand, front-line perspectives will enrich our search for solutions.

We meet at a moment when this crime, which should have been consigned to a closed chapter of history, is once again in the headlines. In the remote, mountainous regions of northern and central Tigray, women and girls are being subjected to sexual violence with a level of cruelty beyond comprehension. Health-care workers are documenting new cases of rape and gang rape daily despite their fear of reprisals and attacks on the limited shelters and clinics still in operation. The report (S/2021/312) before us records allegations of more than 100 rape cases since hostilities erupted in November 2020. It may be many months before we know the full scale and magnitude — the extent and impact — of those atrocities.

There is no question that the Council has adopted ground-breaking resolutions to combat sexual violence. But the question could be asked as to what those resolutions mean right now on the ground in Tigray. When history looks back on this painful episode, as part of the long litany of battles fought on the bodies of women and girls, from Bosnia to Rwanda, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere, we will rightly be asked what we did to honour our commitments. For its part, my Office has engaged with the authorities at the highest level to offer technical assistance and support, and will continue to closely monitor the situation, calling for restraint, humanitarian access, provision of services and effective investigation.

The chasm between resolutions and reality, between aspirations and operations, is also evident on every page of the twelfth annual report of the Secretary-General before us today. The report covers 18 country situations and documents more than 2,500 United Nations-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence committed in the course of 2020. As in previous years, the vast majority, or 96 per cent, of those incidents targeted women and girls. Reports of sexual violence against men and boys were recorded in almost all of the countries examined, with the majority occurring in detention settings. Eight verified cases were found to target lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex individuals. While such figures convey the severity and brutality of verified incidents, they do not reflect the global scale or prevalence of that crime.

The chronic underreporting of wartime sexual violence due to stigma, insecurity, fear of reprisals and lack of services, has been compounded by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) containment measures. Lockdowns, curfews,

quarantines, fears of contracting or transmitting the virus, mobility restrictions and limited access to services, as shelters closed and clinics were repurposed for the pandemic response, added a layer of complexity to existing structural, institutional and sociocultural barriers to reporting. Proactive measures to foster an enabling environment for survivors to safely come forward and seek redress have become more urgent than ever.

Many survivors have broken their silence, but many others have been broken by the silence forced upon them. Shame, isolation, rejection and the anguish of having nowhere to turn has shattered lives and livelihoods. Alongside the data, the report also mentions human stories: the mother and daughter in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo who fled a rebel attack on their village only to be raped by Government soldiers arriving to fight the rebels; the displaced families who live in constant fear of being forced to marry their women and girls to armed elements in the Central African Republic; the girl who was gang-raped by four armed men in Tripoli whose family refused to file a complaint due to social norms around honour, shame and victim-blame, coupled with fears of retaliation; the adolescent girl who was gang-raped by three soldiers as she harvested fruit near a displacement camp in Darfur; the survivors of captivity by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) who were forced to abandon their children conceived as a result of rape due to a lack of social acceptance; and the Bosnian woman who was raped in 1995 and is still seeking redress for the physical and psychological trauma that she endured.

Each of those cases cries out for justice. The survivor-centred approach articulated in resolution 2467 (2019) demands that their voices be heard and heeded in policy and programmatic decisions, that they be treated with dignity and provided with quality, multisectoral assistance and that they be seen by their societies as the holders of rights that will ultimately be respected and enforced.

Protection is tied to participation and power. Yet this is imperilled by a global political climate of pushback on women's rights and shrinking civic space, evident in a disturbing trend of misogynistic attacks on women's human rights defenders and reprisals against women who are vocal and visible in public life.

At a time when the Secretary-General has called for a global ceasefire to focus on defeating this disease, COVID-19 has given rise to new gender-based protection concerns. The report records cases of sexual violence against women detained for alleged violations of curfews and quarantines, as well as violations by armed groups that have taken advantage of the pandemic to intensify their operations and gain ground. The report makes a case for survivors' rights, needs and voices to inform national response and recovery plans as part of fostering a more equitable post-COVID era. At the same time, the report recognizes that the United Nations system, service providers and civil society organizations swiftly pivoted to virtual approaches, such as hotlines, remote case management and new referral and coordination networks, thereby avoiding a data black-out. Despite those innovations, many of those hardest hit by the overlapping crises of conflict, displacement and COVID-19 have also been the hardest to reach, notably in crowded displacement settings where access to information and services is scarce and women are forced to navigate the gendered digital divide.

Marginalized women tend to be left further and further behind in times of crisis and social stress. To bring the structural root causes of sexual violence into focus, the report views the issue through the lens of intersectionality, ensuring that survivors are not simply treated as a homogenous group. It demonstrates how intersecting forms of inequality, based on ethnic or political affiliation, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, income and migratory status, increase the risks faced by diverse individuals in a context of historical power asymmetries, which are structural and systemic.

The report illustrates the nexus between sexual violence, conflict-driven trafficking in persons and violent extremism, which requires cross-border cooperation and regional response capabilities, notably in the Lake Chad basin, where the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency exacts a heavy toll on women and girls. While some patterns of conflict-related sexual violence transcend national borders, others persist at the subnational level. The intensification of entrenched, localized conflicts is a concerning trend that perpetuates cycles of sexual violence, including in the context of tensions over transhumance corridors, in the Central African Republic and the Sudan. Community-based militias have used rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery as part of identity and resource-based conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and South Sudan, although that is rarely acknowledged by global security bodies.

The lack of service coverage in isolated areas due to weak State presence and infrastructure has become all the more acute during the pandemic. The report calls for sexual and reproductive health care to be designated as an essential service in order to avoid its defunding and de-prioritization in the light of the painful lesson from past epidemics that more women die from a lack of access to reproductive health care than from the disease itself. In rural and remote regions, the distance to health structures is vast and transportation is limited, preventing many survivors from accessing care within the 72-hour post-rape window needed to prevent HIV, sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy.

Service delivery and material assistance cannot be dismissed as a secondary issue for security stakeholders but are in fact the ultimate expression of political will. Meeting the basic needs of survivors and communities at risk doubles as a form of protection against exploitation and abuse. Greater attention must be paid to the risk of desperate families resorting to harmful coping mechanisms, such as early or forced marriage, in response to physical and financial insecurity.

As a critical pillar of prevention and deterrence, the report calls for enhanced efforts to close the accountability and reparations gap. While important developments took place at both the national and international levels in 2020, such as the trial and conviction of notorious warlords Sheka and Lionso for war crimes, including rape in North Kivu, and the first conviction by the International Criminal Court for the crime of forced pregnancy against a member of the Lord's Resistance Army, in other cases investigations were stalled and prosecutions paralysed owing to COVID-19 restrictions. Although committed on a widespread and systematic scale by terrorist groups, sexual violence has not been prosecuted in the context of counter-terrorism trials. This means that no legal precedent has been set recognizing victims of sexual violence as legitimate victims of terrorism on a basis of equality before the law.

In terms of transitional justice, momentum was observed in South Sudan, where the authorities announced the establishment of the African Union Hybrid Court for South Sudan. Last month, the Council of Representatives of Iraq adopted the Yazidi Female Survivors Law, which provides support for victims of ISIL atrocities. My Office has also developed model legislative guidance on conflict-related sexual violence to assist States to harmonize domestic laws with international standards. The report notes that in some cases the adoption of protective legal frameworks stalled not only due to COVID-19 constraints, but following opposition from traditional and religious leaders, as seen in Somalia. That highlights the need to mobilize a broad constituency in both the formal and informal spheres to promote social change. While reparations have been awarded in many cases, they generally remain unpaid, leaving victims empty-handed, even as illicit arms and revenue flow into the hands of the perpetrators.

This year's report lists 52 parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence in situations on the agenda of the Council.

Over 70 per cent are persistent perpetrators, having appeared on the list for five or more years without taking remedial or corrective action. It is critical to ensure greater coherence between the practice of listing and the practice of levying targeted and graduated measures by sanctions committees. If applied in a timely and consistent manner, sanctions can change the calculus of parties that operate on the assumption that rape is cost-free, or even profitable, in the political economy of war in which women are trafficked, traded and sold.

Sexual violence does not occur in a vacuum but is tied to broader security dynamics, such as the resurgence of hostilities, the rise of violent extremism, arms proliferation, population displacement and collapsed rule of law. These factors trigger renewed patterns of sexual violence, which the report finds to be concentrated in contexts of abduction, captivity, displacement, detention, in the vicinity of military bases, in private homes during raids, at checkpoints and in rural areas where women undertake livelihood activities. All tools must work in tandem to protect civilians at risk, support survivors, reform security sectors and compel compliance by parties. That comprehensive approach is reflected in the 11 joint communiqués and frameworks of cooperation that my Office has signed with conflict-affected countries to anchor national ownership. The most recent is the framework of cooperation that I signed with the Government of the Sudan in March, which includes efforts to address sexual violence as an integral part of the broader political and democratic transition. In all contexts, it is critical to emphasize that policies of zero tolerance cannot carry zero consequences.

Building back better in the wake of this pandemic requires an inclusive, intersectional and gender-informed approach. Let us not miss, or misunderstand, this moment. This is not just a point in time; it is a turning point in history. The pandemic demands a paradigm shift: to silence the guns and amplify the voices of women; and to invest in public welfare rather than the instruments of warfare. We need to shift the leadership paradigm to ensure that women and survivors are represented. We need to shift the public spending paradigm to reduce military expenditures and strengthen institutions. And we need to shift the security paradigm to foster human security and resilience amid social and economic shocks.

The pandemic has laid bare the intersecting inequalities that plague our societies and are compounded by conflict, displacement and institutional fragility. The only cure for these overlapping ills is an injection of political resolve and resources equal to the scale of the challenge. It is not the time to return to the status quo, but rather to dig deeper and tackle the root causes of this problem as never before.

From Tigray to Tripoli, from the Kivus to the camps of Darfur, women across the world look to the Council to realize the vision set out in its 10 transformative women and peace and security resolutions. A gender-responsive global pandemic recovery is everyone's business. It is unfinished business, but it cannot be business as usual. It is time to write a new social contract in which no military or political leader is above the law and no woman or girl is beneath the scope of its protection. It is time for decisive action to mitigate the risks of sexual violence before it has begun. As history has taught us, prevention is the best and only cure.

Annex 2**Briefing by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Denis Mukwege**

[Original: French]

I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Viet Nam to the United Nations for inviting me to speak at this open debate on conflict-related sexual violence.

The year 2020 marked the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and the women and peace and security agenda. We welcome the fact that our struggle for the dignity of women survivors of sexual violence is on the international agenda and that the issue of conflict-related sexual violence is finally gaining visibility among policymakers and decision makers.

Nevertheless, advances in international law should not obscure the fact that the scourge of sexual violence, which is truly a pandemic, persists in all conflict contexts. Moreover, responses to it remain underfunded, and a climate of impunity for sexual crimes is still more the rule than the exception. We are still a long way from establishing a red line against the use of rape and sexual violence as a strategy of war, domination and terror.

That is why our struggle for a world in which every woman and girl has the right to live free from violence continues — as the overwhelming majority of victims still do not receive the assistance and support they need, or receive justice and reparations for the atrocities they have suffered.

The great challenge we face today is to effectively implement the existing normative framework and to translate the many commitments made by the Security Council into concrete realities for the benefit of survivors.

It is in that context that we welcome the determination of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to turn commitments into obligations and resolutions into results. We have taken note of the determination expressed in various recommendations contained in a recent report by the Secretary-General (S/2021/312) aimed at filling the gaps in the global strategy to combat sexual violence and concretely implementing the measures taken in the women and peace and security agenda.

In that connection, the Secretary-General rightly made the sobering observation that, during the first 10 years of the mandate establishing a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, not a single person or entity that perpetrated acts of sexual violence was subjected to the sanctions established by the Security Council for that very purpose.

That is why we welcome the fact that, in August 2020, the Council imposed sanctions on the leader of the armed *Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation* group in the Central African Republic for planning, ordering or committing acts of sexual violence, including rape.

We hope that this important precedent will not remain an isolated case, as everyone recognizes that efforts to ensure accountability and justice are the best tools for prevention. As long as these heinous crimes are not punished and sanctioned, they will continue. This is the weak link in the strategies to respond to sexual violence and deter potential perpetrators and their political and military chains of command from committing these barbaric acts that bring shame on our common humanity.

I therefore reiterate my call to the international community and all States to draw a red line against the use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war and to punish the perpetrators and instigators of these odious crimes with blacklists, economic, financial and political sanctions and legal proceedings.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we at Panzi Hospital continue our efforts to respond to conflict-related sexual violence according to a holistic assistance model based on four pillars — medical, psychological, socioeconomic and legal. This survivor-focused “one-stop centre” model aims to integrate all women’s health needs in one place, within the primary health-care system, in order to avoid discrimination and stigmatization.

But we must not only address the consequences of violence, we must also ensure the non-repetition of crimes by strengthening efforts to fight impunity. Victims are entitled to not only quality holistic care but also justice, truth and reparations.

Various Security Council resolutions have highlighted that impunity for those allegedly responsible for the most serious crimes, including sexual crimes, remains one of the main obstacles to peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and explains, in large part, the perpetuation of mass atrocities to this day in the conflict provinces in the east of the country, notably Ituri and the Kivus.

That is the reason behind our advocacy efforts to implement the recommendations of the mapping report on the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 1993 and 2003 — one of the darkest periods in the country’s modern history, during which women and girls paid a heavy price and all the fighting forces — both Congolese and foreign — made massive, methodical and systematic use of rape and sexual assault as a strategy of terror and subjugation.

However, more than 10 years after its publication by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, none of the report’s recommendations aimed at putting in place all the tools of transitional justice have been implemented. This is particularly shocking in view of the scale and seriousness of the crimes committed against the civilian population for decades.

We would like to draw the attention of the members of the Security Council to the fact that political and military solutions have thus far failed to ensure the protection of civilians and to bring stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While the Congolese authorities and the United Nations have begun discussions on a strategy for the gradual and progressive withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we believe it is essential to place the fight against impunity and the use of all transitional justice mechanisms at the heart of this strategy, thus emphasizing the need to prioritize a profound reform of the security sector and the prosecution of the most serious crimes through the establishment of international or internationalized mechanisms for the prosecution and trial of the most serious crimes.

I am grateful for all efforts to end impunity and to support the implementation of a holistic transitional justice strategy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This justice imperative is a prerequisite for breaking the cycle of violence and instability and a sine qua non for moving forward on the path to sustainable development and peace. Together we can end sexual violence and act for human dignity, justice and peace.

Annex 3

Briefing by the Director of the South Sudan Women with Disabilities Network, Caroline Atim

I thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. I am Caroline Atim, Founder and Executive Director of the South Sudan Women with Disabilities Network, an organization that works directly with women with disabilities, including survivors of gender-based violence. Today, as a deaf woman, I am speaking on behalf of those survivors and on behalf of all women and girls with disabilities. My sign language interpreter will be voicing my statement today.

Despite the peace deal, South Sudan remains engulfed by intercommunal, ethnic, political and armed conflicts, where gender-based violence is deliberately used as a tool of humiliation against women and girls. More than 65 per cent of South Sudanese women have experienced sexual or physical violence, a figure that is double the global average and among the highest in the world. Women and girls with disabilities are at even greater risk of sexual violence during conflict.

A lethal combination of impunity for perpetrators and deep-rooted inequality and discrimination means that gender-based violence, including sexual violence against women and girls, is not taken seriously as a crime, and neither is its devastating impact addressed. Even before the current conflict, rape in marriage was considered acceptable, and more than 50 per cent of girls married before they turned 18. The rates of child, early and forced marriage have only increased since the conflict began and have been further exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Survivors are often forced to marry their rapists. Girls are sometimes raped to compensate for crimes of their relatives or as acts of revenge. Women have been raped and forced to bear children to replace dead relatives. These inhuman and unjust practices must end.

Globally, women and girls with disabilities are two to three times more likely to experience gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation, especially during conflict, as they face increasing isolation, lose access to support networks, may have limited mobility or are left behind.

Let me share the example of a young girl whose heartbreaking story illustrates the plight of women and girls with disabilities. In 2014, during the conflict in Bor, a deaf 14-year-old girl was raped several times after being abandoned by family members who fled the fighting. She was unable to communicate her trauma to anyone or seek necessary health and other services in the immediate aftermath. When I met her and was able to communicate with her in sign language, we were able to understand what happened to her and provide her with immediate care — only to find out that she was HIV positive. Had she had access to an interpreter and timely medical care, she could have been helped sooner, but those necessary services were not available to her and she had to suffer in silence. That is unacceptable.

This story illustrates some of the ways in which the suffering of women and girls with disabilities is compounded by the discrimination they already face. They are easy prey for rapists, who know they can act with impunity because women with disabilities, even more than others, may not be believed if they report that violence. They often struggle to access limited or otherwise inadequate health facilities, safe shelters or even basic health and legal information when they need them most. The COVID-19 pandemic has made these conditions even worse due to lockdowns and interruption of services, which have kept women with disabilities isolated in their homes.

And yet responses to gender-based violence often neglect the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities, and very limited data is systematically collected about our experiences, including by the United Nations. Instead, there is a lack of understanding of our rights, combined with stereotypes that we cannot make choices for ourselves and that our perspectives do not matter. For example, the false assumption that women with disabilities are not capable of having consensual relationships means many are never provided with information about their bodies or their rights, in turn making them more vulnerable to abuse, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

In situations where survivors of sexual violence bear children, both the children and the women who bear or raise them can face devastating consequences due to deep-rooted gender inequality. They are both targets of extreme stigma and discrimination. These women are often ostracized by their communities and abandoned, left with few resources, and can face long-lasting physical and psychological trauma. Some are forced out on the streets while others, especially girls, are traded off for cattle. The only way to address the tragedy of these women and girls and their children is to address prevailing inequalities and protect their fundamental rights in areas of conflict.

The rights, experiences and voices of survivors must be at the centre of any response to gender-based violence. That includes survivors with disabilities. Survivors have fundamental rights that entitle them to services according to their specific needs — they must have access to comprehensive and non-discriminatory services, including psychosocial support, sexual and reproductive health and rights, mental health care, access to legal services and training to develop livelihood skills. That is what a robust survivor-centred approach looks like, and that is the standard to which the Security Council committed itself through resolution 2467 (2019).

Currently, the widespread availability of firearms in our highly militarized society leaves women at risk of all forms of gender-based violence. The sale of illicit weapons must be stopped to ensure women's safety. Those responsible for crimes must be held accountable through the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, which must be established and become fully functional, in accordance with Chapter 5 of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. All parties must prioritize the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all of their diversity, including those with disabilities, and in all aspects of the current peace process, and must ensure that the 35 per cent quota provided for in the Revitalized Agreement is met. South Sudan must respect its human rights obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2475 (2019), on the protection of people with disabilities in armed conflicts, and all resolutions on women and peace and security. Lastly, we urge all actors to ensure that rights, inclusion and accessibility for women and girls with disabilities are at the heart of all efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

For the sake of our humanity, our dignity and our future, we need an end to war and violence in South Sudan. The lives of thousands of South Sudanese women and girls, in Juba, in Malakal, in Bentiu, in Wau and Jonglei, cannot be traded away for a fleeting respite from fighting. If their suffering is forgotten, our wounds will never heal. That risks future conflict. For sustainable peace, we need inclusivity, justice and reconciliation with the past.

In conclusion, I urge the Security Council to reinforce the fact that a holistic, survivor-centred approach is, by definition, one that is rights-based, accessible and designed in partnership with diverse women, including women with disabilities, and to urge all Governments to uphold their obligations to provide services for

gender-based violence, including sexual and reproductive health services. In accordance with resolution 2567 (2021), all parties to the conflict and other armed actors must cease and prevent further sexual violence and adopt a survivor-centred approach in their response in South Sudan. Additionally, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan must fulfil its protection mandate to prevent and respond to gender-based violence wherever it is deployed and strengthen the capacity of the justice system to fully prosecute all forms of such violence and human rights violations.

The Council must emphasize that justice and accountability efforts, including compensation and reparations processes, must be rights-based, survivor-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory, and, above all, they must avoid exacerbating the harm already done. Those responsible for crimes must be held accountable through the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, which should be established and fully functional in accordance with chapter 5 of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

The Council must urgently stem the flow of illicit weapons in order to establish an environment conducive to implementation of the agreement.

It must also call on all actors to ensure that the rights and participation of, and accessibility for, women and girls with disabilities are at the heart of efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. It should prioritize the implementation of resolution 2475 (2019) in order to ensure that the rights and perspectives of women and girls with disabilities are reflected across all country-specific agenda items, including by mandating peace operations to take into account women and girls with disabilities in protection of civilians and human rights monitoring activities, and to support their full, equal and meaningful participation in peace, political and humanitarian processes.

The Council must demand that all parties prioritize the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all of their diversity, including those with disabilities, in all aspects of the current peace process. That includes meeting the 35 per cent quota provided for in the agreement for women's participation at all levels.

It must call on the international donor community to adequately resource civil-society organizations led by women and girls, particularly those with expertise in disability rights, so that they can take on leadership roles throughout the humanitarian-development-peace continuum.

The Security Council can and must fulfil its obligations to the people of South Sudan and to the many women and girls in conflicts around the world to whom it committed to ending, once and for all, all forms of gender-based violence.

Annex 4

Briefing by the Senior Women Protection Adviser at the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, Beatrix Attinger Colijn

I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to speak at this important event. It is a great honour.

Exactly one year ago today, I left Bangui on board the last commercial flight to Europe, as a voluntary prevention measure due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. With me were many colleagues from international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a number of them from organizations that provide medical services to survivors of sexual violence. At that time, the prediction was that the weak health system would not be able to deal with a general outbreak of COVID-19.

Now, one year on, the official number of COVID cases in the Central African Republic stands at 5,682 confirmed cases, with 5,112 recoveries and 75 deaths. Within the United Nations family in the Central African Republic, we counted 749 cases and deplore six deaths. In the early summer of 2020, most of us who had left returned to the country and resumed our work in the field. Internal flights have long since resumed, and humanitarian services continue to operate. With testing being rare, COVID-19 looms over the country with an unknown magnitude. The general population does not wear masks, and moto taxis carry multiple passengers. Despite continuous sensitization being carried out by the Mission, there is no social distancing outside the work environment of international organizations. The virus seems a neglected enemy in a place where so many other challenges exist.

I have served in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for more than five years, and, unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis we are witnessing is not the only one affecting service provision for victims of grave human rights violations, including sexual violence. Over the past five months, the national army — the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic — and bilateral forces carried out military operations against armed groups, in particular against those groups that formed the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement ahead of the first round of presidential and legislative elections in December last year. Numerous installations of humanitarian organizations were destroyed or occupied by combatants, and hospitals were looted, bringing service provision to a halt. Humanitarian access to many regions has become from risky to impossible owing to numerous thefts of vehicles and bridges being deliberately destroyed by armed elements.

Those violent clashes in many parts of the country contrast with periods of hope and positive developments. On 27 December I joined many of my colleagues to observe the election day in Bangui. It was amazing to see the thousands of people streaming to the voting centres, queuing patiently sometimes for hours to cast their ballots. All of the women I talked to were keen to assure me that it did not matter how long they had to wait so long as they would be able to exercise their civic duty and vote. In March, during my field visit to Bambari, the women's associations assured me that they continue to support survivors of sexual violence despite the fact that their office building could temporarily not be used. They had stored all their equipment in a safe place, as a preventive measure, before the armed groups had invaded Bambari in December.

As Senior Women Protection Adviser, my role is to advise and support MINUSCA's civilian, police and military components in implementing the Mission's Security Council mandate to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

In my work, I have come to understand two crucial areas that define the extent of the response to conflict-related sexual violence: one is the social obstacles that impede survivors from reporting violations; the other concerns access to justice.

In March, two non-governmental organizations reported the following:

“[One of] the most common forms of violence suffered by adolescents, which has continued to affect the latter during the recent armed crisis in Boali and Damara, [is] sexual violence. [The] attitude of indifference of the community towards this problem ... appears to further fuel the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators. In the current crisis situation, this is exacerbated by insecurity and hunger”.

Boali and Damara are less than 100 kilometres north of Bangui. Further afield in more rural areas, other barriers prevent survivors of sexual violence from seeking justice: these include stigmatization, rejection by the family and community, and reprisals by the perpetrators. In the majority of locations outside Bangui, there is no functional chain of justice, with courts non-operational and prosecutors absent. Equally, in large parts of the country, access to health facilities is difficult or impossible due to weak infrastructure and lack of transportation.

At this sad point, I want to speak about some of my most inspiring encounters with civil-society members and survivors of sexual violence. Our mandate spells out the role of civil society and community leaders in enabling access to services for survivors and shapes our support to partners. While the Mission works to strengthen the justice system in the long run, there also has to be a focus on immediate remedies for survivors. One of the first is to restore their dignity.

As one NGO partner said to me:

“We want to show them they are not alone, that there are others in such a situation, and give them something they can do to improve their confidence”.

Last year I visited a project in the north of Bria, in the centre of the country, developed by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic Community Violence Reduction programme. Men and women, some of them survivors of sexual violence, were tending to their plots, where they grew vegetables. The women did not want to speak about the violence they had suffered, but they did proudly show me the growth of their plants, the prospect of some income and personal independence: income-generating activities to regain control of one's life during the long wait for justice.

Travelling in the field can mean five hours for a few kilometres. And by travelling in cars, we do not reach all the locations that are accessible only by motorbike, on horseback or on foot. Roads are the veins of the country, which bring support from the centres to the isolated areas. Where the population has no means to travel, regular visits by the Mission and humanitarians connect them to essential services. On our way back from the farming project, our convoy was stopped in a small village along the axis. The village chief was waiting with the father of a girl, a victim of rape, who had walked more than 15 kilometres to reach the main road, waiting for us to pass, so he could report the crime.

I reported that case to the United Nations police, which then initiated an investigation. And while that region still awaits the re-establishment of courts and State authorities, our programmes and support for local partners are the first steps to hear victims, provide assistance and restore their sense of confidence and belief in a future where impunity will give way to justice and development.

Annex 5**Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**

[Original: Chinese and English]

China wishes to thank Viet Nam for the initiative to hold today's open debate. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten and the other briefers for their statements; their comments and suggestions will help the Security Council better discuss and handle this important issue.

In the midst of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, armed conflicts and terrorist activities do not press the pause button, while humanitarian and security crises have continued unabated. As the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312) points out, sexual violence is still used as a tactic of war and terrorism, with women in conflict bearing the brunt and suffering the most. China firmly opposes the use of sexual violence as a means of war and strongly condemns any acts of sexual violence against women and girls. China calls on the international community to attach great importance to the issue and to implement integrated policies to eliminate sexual violence in conflict and advance the women and peace and security agenda so that fresh progress can be achieved.

First, we must focus on tackling the root causes and step up efforts aimed at conflict prevention and at maintaining peace. Secretary-General Guterres once emphasized in a report that the ultimate goal of the agenda to combat sexual violence in conflict is not to make conflict free of sexual violence but rather to make the world free of wars. So long as conflicts and wars continue, there will be the possibility that sexual violence may be used as a tactic of war and terrorism.

The international community should focus on addressing the root causes of sexual violence in conflict in order to completely eradicate the breeding grounds therefor, follow such principles as non-interference in internal affairs and the non-use of force, and remain committed to settling disputes through peaceful means. The Security Council should actively promote the political settlement of hotspot issues and play a greater role in conflict prevention and peacekeeping. Parties to conflict should earnestly follow and effectively implement the Secretary-General's global ceasefire appeal and resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation.

Secondly, we must promote gender equality and women's empowerment and support women in playing a greater role in economic and social development as well as peace and security. Sexual violence in conflict does not occur in a vacuum but often reflects deep-rooted problems such as gender inequality and inadequate development, among others. The COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a heavy blow to conflict situations, putting women in an even more vulnerable position.

Within the overall framework of women's empowerment and development, the international community should respond to the issue of sexual violence in conflict in an integrated manner so as to eliminate gender-based discrimination and differentiated treatment, promote women's development in tandem with social and economic progress and create synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is necessary to continue to support women's broader and deeper participation in peace processes and in carrying out mediation, while giving women more opportunities to participate in decision-making with an enhanced capacity and voice.

Thirdly, it is important to ensure the ownership of the countries concerned and support their capacity-building. The countries concerned bear the primary responsibility for preventing and combating sexual violence in conflict and protecting women and children in their respective countries. The international community

should encourage and support the countries concerned in advancing the women and peace and security agenda according to their national conditions and in taking strong actions to combat sexual violence in conflict. On the basis of respect for the sovereignty and jurisdiction of countries concerned, the international community should help with their security and judicial capacity-building, among other aspects.

The relevant United Nations entities should carry out their work based on their respective mandates and expertise, do their best with existing resources, strengthen coordination and forge synergies. It is necessary to support regional and subregional organizations to leverage their unique advantages and to explore programmes and practices based on the actual conditions of their regions. It is also important to encourage women's groups and civil society to play a constructive role.

Women and armed conflict is one of the 12 key areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As the host country of the Fourth World Conference on Women and as an advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment, China will continue to work with the international community to make greater contributions to the elimination of sexual violence in conflict and to advancing women's development around the world.

Annex 6

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson

I thank all briefers for their presentations and — even more crucially — their daily tireless work. I also thank the Special Representative for the presentation of the annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312) and welcome the concrete recommendations therein.

This is the twelfth dedicated report by the Secretary-General, which clearly shows that conflict-related sexual violence — unforgivable and still unpunished — is widely used as a weapon of war across conflicts. We need to treat it systematically as such, picking up its early signs, countering its use, making addressing it part of ceasefires and peace agreements and making sure that its severity and impact is not ignored and that those who commit it are punished and not included in amnesty provisions. We also need to admit that the victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are victims and survivors of war. They deserve support and justice.

Neither as States nor as the Security Council can we address conflict-related violence without recognizing the need to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, by women and girls. The report of the Secretary-General confirms that gender inequality is a root cause and a driver of sexual violence in times of conflict and peace. It turns women and girls into targets and a means of waging war. It contributes to stigma, victim-blaming and the underreporting of sexual violence. Gender inequality, compounded by harmful social norms, also means that the price for sexual violence remains low or non-existent for perpetrators and results in gaps in legal frameworks and services for survivors. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated these inequalities, and to even a greater extent for women and girls in conflict situations — as the Council recognized in resolution 2532 (2020).

The Secretary-General has drawn attention to the reports of sexual violence against women and girls in Tigray. We have acknowledged the Ethiopian Government's willingness to collaborate with international human rights experts, and we urge it to guarantee an independent and credible investigation, including an unimpeded access of experts, as well as access for humanitarian aid organizations so that they can assist the survivors of sexual violence.

In Yemen, conflict-related sexual violence has been reportedly committed by all parties, including in detention and internally displaced persons camps. We welcome the adoption of resolution 2564 (2021), which designates an individual to the Yemen sanctions list based on actions related to the systematic detention, torture and sexual violence conducted against politically active women.

We reiterate our call for accountability for conflict-related sexual violence in Syria, which is long overdue, as well as for violence committed by the Tatmadaw in Myanmar.

As a member of the Security Council, Estonia will continue to underline the fundamental importance of human rights, including women and girls' human rights, in combating conflict-related sexual violence. We continue to call for women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace processes as well as in COVID-19 recovery. We have and will continue to underline the absolutely crucial importance of accountability — through domestic systems of justice or, if appropriate, through the International Criminal Court. Estonia continues its support for the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which in 2020 provided technical assistance in the prosecution and trial of Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka.

Redress and reparations for survivors are part of accountability. We support the designation and use of sexual violence as a stand-alone criterion for sanctions and for briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Security Council sanctions committees.

We encourage all parties to conflict to adopt specific commitments to addressing conflict-related sexual violence. We continue to call for a non-discriminatory and rights-based approach to assisting survivors of sexual violence, respecting their diversity and their needs. This approach includes providing comprehensive services, including psychosocial, legal, and sexual and reproductive-health services as well as livelihood support.

We continue to support the mandating and deployment of women protection advisers and look forward to their deployment in Libya and the Sudan. We see sufficient capacity and funding as key for the functioning of monitoring and reporting arrangements.

We will continue to call for the Council to speak up on reprisals and attacks, including targeted sexual violence against women active in public life, women human rights defenders and those providing assistance to survivors of sexual violence.

The shadow that conflict-related sexual violence casts is long: its memory is carried forward, and it can fuel endless cycles of violence. Bringing justice and addressing the rights and needs of the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence is one step towards breaking this cycle.

Annex 7**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: French]

Let me begin by welcoming Viet Nam's commitment to addressing sexual violence in conflict. I also thank the Special Representative, Mr. Mukwege and the other representatives of civil society for their briefings.

France shares the concerns expressed in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312) and in the briefings and statements made today. Conflict-related sexual violence continues with impunity, particularly against the backdrop of the pandemic. I am thinking in particular of the situations in Tigray, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria and the Central African Republic.

The time has come, not to take stock, but to act. Our collective responsibility is to ensure the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. We must also ensure that the commitments made by the parties concerned are respected.

France strongly condemns the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and a tool of terror. We also condemn any sexist, misogynistic or homophobic discourse that exacerbates violence.

I wish to emphasize four points.

First, all forms of violence must be punished. The pandemic has reduced access to police, justice and health services. Non-compliance and impunity remain major problems. This is the case in Syria, in particular, where France is strongly committed to ensuring that the perpetrators of such crimes are punished. France believes in the importance of justice, reparation and guarantees that these violent acts will not be repeated. We welcome the role of the International Criminal Court for its contribution to the fight against this scourge and note in this regard the recent trial court conviction in Uganda of Dominic Ongwen.

Secondly, we must adopt a survivor-centred approach and ensure comprehensive care for survivors. They must have access to medical, psychological and social follow-up to help them return to a normal life. This is why France is maintaining its financial commitment in the amount of €6.2 million for the Global Fund for Survivors of Sexual Violence, created by Nobel Peace Prize winners Mr. Mukwege and Ms. Murad.

Thirdly, we must put an end to the obstacles to access to sexual and reproductive-health and rights. We regret the politicization of these issues which leads to losing sight of the best interests of women and girls. France is funding a €5 million project in Chad to empower women through better access to these services as well as health and psychosocial care. The protection of these rights will be at the heart of the Generation Equality Forum process, launched in Mexico City and which will conclude in Paris from 30 June to 2 July.

Finally, the Security Council needs to do more. France will continue to support the inclusion of the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in the Council's mandates, promoting the implementation of resolutions adopted under the women and peace and security agenda and the provision of adequate resources for the teams on the ground. In addition, the sanctioning of perpetrators of sexual violence is necessary, and the Security Council must do more to this end.

This battle must be waged relentlessly and without compromise. France will work towards this objective, particularly in the context of the Generation Equality Forum.

Annex 8**Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T. S. Tirumurti**

At the outset, we thank Viet Nam for convening today's open debate on this important issue. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2021/312) and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten and all the distinguished briefers for sharing their insights.

Sexual violence in armed conflicts, be they perpetrated by State and non-State actors, is a weapon used to subjugate people. It fuels displacement, destabilizes and traumatizes communities, weakens governance and imperils the opportunities for post-conflict reconciliation and stability. Despite the strong framework put in place by the Security Council over the past decade, the level of compliance by parties to conflicts remains alarmingly low. The gap between what is recommended and the reality in the field remains intact.

With a view to preventing atrocities, end the culture of impunity and rehabilitate and reintegrate the survivors, my delegation wishes to highlight the following points.

First, it is vital for States Members of the United Nations to develop comprehensive legal frameworks in line with international standards, to ensure the effective prosecution of sexual violence as a self-standing crime. National Governments have the primary responsibility for prosecuting and deterring such crimes in conflict situations on their territories, even if they are alleged to have been committed by non-State actors. Where required, the United Nations could assist Member States in augmenting their capacities to deal with this issue.

Second, Member States should adopt a victim-centred approach aimed at preventing and responding to sexual violence in armed conflicts, in line with resolution 2467 (2019). States must ensure adequate funding for comprehensive, non-discriminatory and multisectoral assistance for victims of sexual violence, such as medical, psychological, social and legal services.

Third, understanding the nexus between terrorism, the financing of violent extremist groups, and human trafficking and sexual violence in armed conflicts must inform Council action on this important matter.

Fourth, the sanctions regimes and other targeted measures by the Security Council need to be strengthened in order to utilize their full potential to advance women's protection from sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, including by listing individuals and entities involved in conflict-related sexual violence against women.

Fifthly, greater participation of women in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation processes needs to be promoted to address deep-rooted inequality and subordination in the society. For any peace process to succeed, it is important that this be made a precondition.

Sixth, the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in peace operations and increasing women's representation in peacekeeping are prerequisites for prevention and response.

Seventh and not least in importance, it is imperative to promote synergy and effective coordination so as to avoid duplication in the working of various United Nations organs. The issue of violence against women, including sexual violence, is discussed by other United Nations bodies, including the Human Rights Council. Deliberations at the Security Council should therefore remain focused on such

atrocities when they are perpetrated in situations of armed conflicts that threaten international peace and security.

In 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined the Secretary-General's circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations. India has also signed the Secretary-General's Voluntary Compact against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

India has the distinction of sending, in 2007, the first all-women formed police unit contingent to Liberia. Not only did this unit manage controlling crime, deter sexual and gender-based violence and help rebuild safety and confidence among the Liberian population, but it also operationalized the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000) into action. These courageous Indian women patrolled Monrovia streets at night, taught Liberian women self-defence skills, conducted classes on sexual violence, maintained calm during the Ebola crisis and devoted time and resources above and beyond the call of duty to protect the local communities. The legacy these Indian woman peacekeepers left behind was the next generation of female Liberian leaders who are serving in the national police today.

Major Suman Gawani, an Indian woman peacekeeper deployed in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, received United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award for 2019 for her role in mentoring over 230 United Nations military observers and in ensuring the presence of women military observers in each of the Mission's team sites. She also trained South Sudanese Government forces and helped them launch their action plan to prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

India welcomes the uniformed gender parity strategy to increase the number of women peacekeepers. We also support increasing the deployment of women protection advisers for effective monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence in the field.

Burdens on health-care systems and the economic fallout resulting from the coronavirus disease pandemic threaten to put women and girls in armed conflicts at even higher risk. States Members of the United Nations need to work together to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on sexual violence in armed conflicts and to preserve our hard-won progress in this field.

Let me conclude by acknowledging the progress that has been achieved by United Nations entities in monitoring, reporting and listing persistent offenders over the years. However, we need to continue focusing on closing the compliance gaps through a range of context-specific and inclusive actions. India reaffirms its commitment to actively contributing to the collective endeavour of effectively tackling sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

Annex 9**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

I thank the Vietnamese presidency for convening today's open debate and in particular for ensuring that civil society is so strongly represented among the briefers.

I thank Caroline Atim and Denis Mukwege for being truth-tellers of the reality of sexual violence when it is all too often shrouded in stigma and obscured. Their focus on empowering survivors helps them to regain the sense of agency that these violations so horribly undermine.

I also want to pay tribute to Special Representative Patten. Her work in documenting the evidence of these heinous crimes and calling to account their perpetrators makes an enormous contribution and serves to elucidate our understanding. Importantly, evidence-based reporting reinforces our ability to address impunity. Today's work of documenting crimes will lead to tomorrow's convictions. The Special Representative's work is badly needed and deeply appreciated.

I was especially pleased to hear from Beatrix Attinger Colijn, the Senior Women Protection Adviser who worked with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. In our view, ensuring the adequate resourcing of women protection advisers from regular mission budgets is crucial. The Security Council has an obligation to follow through on the promises it makes — the promises that we make — in the establishment of mandates, including women protection adviser posts. Indeed, to fully assume our clear responsibilities, we should expand the deployment of women protection advisers.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312) warns of the risk that the coronavirus disease will reverse hard-won gains on gender equality, reminding us that inequality is a root cause and driver of sexual violence in times of conflict. Of course, it is also a driver of sexual violence in times of peace too. Let us be clear: to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, including in conflict, our most fundamental task is to achieve gender equality at every level.

We should not fool ourselves that the shocking sexual and gender-based violence in times of war, disease and disaster is somehow extraordinary or aberrant. Let us not fool ourselves that things will "go back to normal" once the crisis has passed. What we witness in times of conflict and crisis is the transfer of violence from the private to the public sphere. We see the deliberate weaponization of the gendered violence that one in three of us who are women will experience in our lifetime. Most of the violence is suffered by women and girls from men they know. This is a kind of normal no woman wants to return to. The kind of normal we cannot afford to return to.

I echo therefore the words of the Secretary-General that recovery from this pandemic demands us to "silence the guns and amplify the voices of women peacebuilders, as well as to invest in public welfare rather than in the instruments of warfare" (S/2021/312, *para. 4*). To succeed, we must support the courageous work of grassroots and women-led organizations, as well as brave women human rights defenders. At a minimum, we must protect them from reprisals.

Our recovery policies must also recognize the intersecting forms of discrimination. The discrimination that compounds vulnerability to violence, as Caroline so powerfully attested today. To build back better we need to advance

equality and participation for all, including those with disabilities, LGBTI+ persons, migrants and refugees and members of racial and ethnic minorities.

And let us remember, the Security Council has the means to act. We have put in place a robust framework to deal with conflict-related sexual violence over the past decade. And yet, compliance by parties to conflict is appallingly, shamefully low. Seventy per cent of the parties listed in the Secretary-General's report have been appearing on the list for five years or more without taking corrective action. The fact is, we are failing in our responsibility if we do not ask ourselves why this is.

The Security Council can and must do more with the tools at its disposal. It is our responsibility. To do what?

We believe that we must fully implement the recommendations of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security.

We believe that we should ensure that monitoring and early warning processes on conflict-related sexual violence are incorporated into all peacekeeping and special political missions that include a protection of civilians mandate.

We believe that we need to examine our use of targeted sanctions — specifically, the designation criteria of conflict-related sexual violence and the listing of sanctioned individuals. This is an underutilized tool to deter and punish sexual violence in conflict. We need to bring together our work on sanctions and gender more systematically. Ireland supports the call by the Secretary-General to invite the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to share information with sanctions committees, and we will play our part in advancing that effort.

Sanctions are not our only tools for seeking accountability. As Special Representative Patten has said, the fight against conflict-related sexual violence is the fight against impunity. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are not somehow lesser crimes. They can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or constitutive acts with respect to genocide. Let us face it. The persistently paltry record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions for conflict-related sexual violence is fundamentally a failure of political will.

Today's debate is not about some vague concept. It is about the reality of our work on international peace and security.

The recent conviction by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of Dominic Ongwen and its affirmation of Bosco Ntaganda's conviction are encouraging developments, as is the continued work of Colombia's transitional justice mechanisms. But they are all too rare, and we believe that the Security Council must reflect on its failure to make effective use of the accountability tools at its disposal, including the referral of situations to the ICC.

We can draw a straight line from impunity for sexual violence in the past to the recurrence of violence in the future. In 2017, sexual and gender-based violence was a hallmark of the Tatmadaw's operations in northern Myanmar and in Rakhine — today, they turn their guns on civilians.

As we heard from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General today, deeply distressing reports of horrific sexual violence continue to emerge from Ethiopia, including abuses perpetrated by armed actors in the conflict in Tigray. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General has spoken of acts that may amount to sexual atrocities. These and other violations must cease immediately. We call on all armed parties to the conflict to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and end hostilities, which will also help to facilitate humanitarian access. We call on them to ensure that their forces respect

and protect civilian populations, particularly women and children, from all human rights abuses and that they explicitly condemn all sexual violence. We welcome the announcement by the High Commissioner for Human Rights confirming plans for a joint investigation with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission into human rights violations in Tigray, including sexual violence. This is an urgent task to bring an end to ongoing violations, and it is also vital for accountability to bring perpetrators to justice, whatever their affiliation. We are in full support of the High Commissioner in this critical undertaking.

As I conclude, the war correspondent Christina Lamb has noted the absence of women's names in war memorials. The stigma of rape in war belongs not to its victims, but to its perpetrators. The stories of survivors of sexual violence, mostly women, need to be told. Importantly they need to be truly heard. But that is not enough.

We must demand the prosecution of the crime of conflict-related sexual violence on an equal basis with other war crimes and crimes against humanity. The survivors of these crimes deserve nothing less than justice. They deserve redress, they deserve access to comprehensive survivor-centred services, including sexual and reproductive health. Above all, they are entitled to the right to participate on a full, equal and meaningful basis in public life. That would be a fitting memorial.

Annex 10

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Michael Kiboino

Kenya thanks Viet Nam for convening this open debate and all the briefers for sharing their diverse perspectives. We also welcome the Secretary-General's current report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312), particularly the focus on frameworks of cooperation with specific country and regional mechanisms.

Kenya strongly condemns gender-based violence and its manifestation in sexual violence in all contexts and all situations. Kenya supports the upholding and strengthening of protection against gender-based violence, including under international human rights law.

Kenya is currently undertaking its second phase of the implementation of the women and peace and security national action plan.

Kenya calls on the Security Council and the international community to support regional efforts against conflict-related sexual violence. In particular, we call on the Council to note and support the outcomes of the ministerial-level meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council on 22 March, chaired by Kenya, on the theme "Women, Peace, Culture and Gender Inclusivity in Africa". The resultant communiqué, among others, underlined the need to build the required infrastructure to provide medical and psychosocial care and trauma healing to victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and all other violations in conflict settings and countries emerging from conflict. It also urges all Member States and partners to invest in awareness programmes, to sensitize communities on the available support and structures for victims and survivors of trauma aimed at addressing stigmatization. The United Nations should and can support the implementation of such infrastructure, particularly in Member States that are fragile from conflict.

Regarding the Security Council framework on women and peace and security, Kenya welcomes the progress made in the advocacy and evolution of the normative framework, addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Allow me to make two observations in regard to gaps and opportunities within the sexual violence in conflict agenda.

First, the gendered impact of intra-State conflicts needs more attention, particularly where conflict-related sexual violence has the resultant effects of early marriage, girls dropping out of school, forced displacements, increased refugee and internally displaced persons living situations, and threats to local women peacebuilders. This calls for strengthened coordination with communal and religious leaders and the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Secondly, women and peace and security resolution 2242 (2015) recognizes that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. The Secretary-General's current report makes specific references to the link between sexual violence, trafficking in persons, terrorism and violent extremism. For instance, the report cites efforts by the United Nations multi-partner trust fund project in Somalia in support of women formerly associated with Al-Shabaab, many of whom are survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

In view of these observations, we wish to make the following recommendations.

Resolution 2475 (2019), which underlines the rights and protection of women and children with disabilities in conflict situations, needs to move from

a disability-needs-based approach to the operationalization of full, equal and meaningful participation of women with disabilities in leadership and decision-making at all levels.

The protection pillar should encompass not only the protection of women, but also the protection of the grass-roots and national gains achieved by women in peace negotiation processes.

Sexual and gender-based violence should be incorporated as a separate listing criterion with concurrent targeted sanctions against specific perpetrators in the mandates and sanction regimes that do not have such language.

Effective coordination between early warning mechanisms and national and local community leaders should be emphasized to mitigate information and reporting gaps.

A survivor-centred approach that factors in all victims, comprises the timely reporting of offenses and accountability, and prioritizes medical, psychological, psychosocial and economic support, in alignment with resolution 2467 (2019), should be strengthened.

And, finally, stronger integration of the women and peace and security, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism agendas should be pursued to ensure the accountability of perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict situations.

Annex 11**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Alicia Buenrostro Massieu**

[Original: Spanish]

Mexico thanks Viet Nam for convening this debate, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312), whose recommendations we support.

My country is deeply alarmed and outraged by the situation detailed in the report on the increase in conflict-related sexual violence and its recurrent use as a tactic of war, repression and torture by State and non-State armed groups, which have taken advantage of the pandemic to continue committing atrocities. My country, Mexico, condemns the very serious situation of sexual violence that we have seen in many current conflicts, be they in Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan or South Sudan, to mention only a few regrettable cases.

Confinements and quarantines have significantly exacerbated sexual and gender-based violence globally. When we add to this the unequal impact on women and girls of the expanded power of those who control the weapons and perpetrate sexual violence with impunity, the result is simply devastating. It is imperative to address the correlation between the proliferation and trafficking in small arms and light weapons and gender-based violence, which often results in sexual violence in both conflict and post-conflict situations.

While we have frameworks and mechanisms in place to prevent and address sexual violence in conflict, including the mandate of the Special Representative, much remains to be done to transform the social norms that perpetuate patriarchal domination, systematic discrimination, prejudice, gender inequality and the stigmatization of victims.

In preventing and addressing sexual violence, we must put survivors — women and girls, but also men, boys and LGBTI+ persons — at the centre of our efforts and decision-making to ensure the provision of legal, medical and economic livelihood assistance, based on their particular needs and with a human rights and intersectional approach that takes into account the multiple barriers they face because of their ethnicity, age, migration status, disability status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Moreover, considering that trauma and psychological effects can be severe and can also deteriorate the mental health and psychosocial well-being of survivors, we must incorporate access to such services and, more broadly, to all health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, not only as a preventive measure, but also as a cornerstone of rebuilding the social fabric. Women and girls with disabilities should be a priority group with regard to access to those services.

We must recognize all victims of sexual violence perpetrated by armed and/or terrorist groups and guarantee their access to multisectoral assistance, reparation and redress for damages, processes that must be designed and implemented together with the victims, ensuring their expeditious access to effective, independent, impartial and gender-sensitive justice systems.

The lack of accountability on the part of perpetrators and the impunity they enjoy contribute to the recurrence of sexual violence and, at the same time, to a lack of confidence and fear on the part of survivors to report it. Legal and institutional frameworks that ensure mechanisms for the reporting, investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators are therefore urgently needed.

The Security Council has the obligation to make use of all the resources at its disposal to prevent and address this scourge. It is essential that the sanctions committees continue to incorporate sexual violence as a criterion for imposing sanctions on perpetrators. But these will remain limited in scope if they are not strengthened through cooperation and information sharing with other bodies, such as the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Sexual violence in armed conflict is a war crime, as stated in the Rome Statute and confirmed by the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Court. The Security Council must refer situations in which these crimes are committed to the Court so that they do not go unpunished.

It is also important to incorporate specific provisions for the prevention of and response to sexual violence in renewals of peacekeeping mandates, as well as to increase the deployment of gender advisers.

Finally, we recognize the essential role of civil society, women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and humanitarian contexts, often providing services not provided by States. And we commit ourselves to their protection from attacks and violence to which they are subjected in the course of their commendable work.

Annex 12

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Niger to the United Nations

[Original: French]

I would like to begin by thanking the speakers whose statements have called our attention to one of the most horrific consequences of conflict.

Thousands of people suffer inhuman sexual violence in times of conflict, committed as a strategy of war, political repression, torture and terror. And the recent report the Secretary-General on the matter (S/2021/312) confirms the disastrous consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic on the incidence of conflict-related sexual violence, especially in terms of reduced access to justice and to support services, weakened control and monitoring systems and the reduction in allocated financial resources.

One of the most effective ways of combating conflict-related sexual violence is prevention, including access to quality education. Attacks against educational establishments and schools are increasingly worrisome. We must protect access to education, in particular for girls, who, in countries affected by conflict, are half as likely to be in school than those living in peaceful countries. They are also more vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence on their way to school.

The presidential statement on attacks against schools, adopted by the Security Council in September 2020 under the presidency of the Niger (S/PRST/2020/8), recalls the need to take into account the increased risk of sexual violence facing girls deprived of access to education, including those who have been forcibly displaced or are living in areas mired in localized violence — noting, moreover, that children affected by a disability are particularly vulnerable.

I should like to draw the attention of the Security Council and of Member States to the heightened vulnerability of women and girls who endure the compound effects of conflict, forced displacement, at times exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, and economic insecurity. In all phases of the cycle of forced displacement, refugee and migrant women and girls are vulnerable to sexual violence, whether in conflict zones, as they flee, in refugee camps, or even during their relocation.

On this issue, the Niger reiterates its concerns with regard to the conditions of migrants and refugees intercepted at sea and disembarked on Libyan territory, where women migrants in overcrowded detention centres face all sorts of violations, including sexual violence. Given the heightened insecurity they experience, there is a need to reconsider the policy of disembarking migrants and refugees intercepted at sea on Libyan territory.

For several years, the countries of the Sahel have been facing a security crisis aggravated by several factors, including the presence of armed terrorist groups, the spread of light weapons, a lack of socioeconomic opportunity and inter-communal tensions.

Emergency situations, humanitarian crises linked to natural disasters and the resultant displacement of populations exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls. There have been reports from the Lake Chad basin region of terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram, abducting girls and women, forcibly integrating among the ranks of their prisoners of war and using them as sex slaves or suicide bombers.

Forced abductions from schools are a matter of concern demanding our attention. It was on 14 April 2014, exactly seven years ago, that Boko Haram conducted the mass abduction of 276 girls in Chibok, many never to see their families again,

prevented from continuing their pursuit of knowledge and subjected to unimaginable violence. In situations of insecurity, such serious incidents have consequences for girls' attendance of school, increasing the risk they will not be schooled, which makes them more vulnerable to early and forced marriage, to early pregnancy and other gender-based violence.

Aware of the need for holistic care for victims and survivors of sexual violence in areas most affected by security crises, we have established specialist support centres in this regard. With regard to children, especially girls linked to armed groups, the Niger established a transit and orientation centre with demobilization and reintegration programmes tailored to children survivors, many of whom have been exposed to sexual violence.

My delegation strongly agrees that Member States and the United Nations system must serve as an example in responding to matters of conflict-related sexual violence.

Recently, following allegations of violations against three women concerning soldiers deployed in the three-border area, the authorities of the countries concerned reacted promptly with the necessary follow-up, including by completing reliable and swift inquiries, conducted in parallel by the National Human Rights Commission and a mission by the Central Force Commander of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, as soon as the facts were brought to their attention.

While recalling those were isolated cases, we welcome the immediate steps taken to investigate, protect civilians, support the victims and apply disciplinary sanctions to the soldiers implicated. This tripartite collaboration, involving civil society, including communities, States and judicial authorities, could serve as an example for the implementation of a rapid-response system in many other situations where allegations of sexual violence can go unanswered.

In the same vein, the culture of impunity for sexual violence, including within the United Nations system, especially in conflict-affected areas, whoever the perpetrator may be, must stop. The credibility of our missions and the fundamental values we stand for depend on it. This is also a question of justice.

In this regard, we welcome the commitment of senior United Nations leaders when it comes to victims' rights and change in institutional culture, with zero tolerance for sexual violence.

The Niger would like to make the following additional recommendations.

First, when it comes to adopting a survivor-centred approach, in keeping with resolution 2467 (2019), it is important that Member States put in place or strengthen judicial and legal assistance in addition to health, psychological, social and economic support.

Secondly, given these specific consequences of conflict-related sexual violence for children, there is a need to ensure an adequate presence of child protection specialists in addition to the deployment of gender advisers. In this regard, the survivor-centred approach must be not only multi-partner but also multidisciplinary, with accessible and quality services taking into account gender-specific factors and the manner in which multiple crises amplify the vulnerabilities of certain groups.

Thirdly, the implementation of effective programmes cannot be achieved without reliable disaggregated data. In this regard, we advocate the strengthening of data-collection systems through increased collaboration with local authorities and a stronger role for civil society, including local human rights organizations.

Fourthly, as a troop-contributing country, the Niger calls for greater efforts to ensure such questions are taken into due account in country processes, including

in strengthening early-warning systems. Member States could also enhance training for defence and security forces on conflict-related sexual violence.

Finally, in conflict-affected areas, it is essential that Member States guarantee that allegations and acts of sexual violence be investigated, with adequate follow-up, and the perpetrators punished. Given the nature of these human rights violations, in particular by armed groups, we recognize the need to reinforce cross-border response and monitoring capabilities and to strengthen regional cooperation in this regard.

We must break the cycle of dual victimization of survivors, silence, taboo and social stigma. That can be achieved only through local actions at the community level. While we welcome the multi-partner trust fund and its contributions to implementing projects in 16 countries affected by conflict, we would like to see greater support to local organizations.

We must collectively tackle the root causes of sexual violence, including sexual discrimination, the lack of economic opportunity and toxic masculinities. Access to quality education, including in areas affected by conflict, remains crucial.

My country, the Niger, reiterates its commitment to fighting conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. It is a matter of collective responsibility that not only do we ensure the gains achieved in this area over recent decades are safeguarded, which requires appropriate funding, but also harness the current crisis to move towards a new, fairer, more egalitarian era, in which conflict-related sexual violence is but a thing of a past.

Annex 13

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul

I thank the Special-Representative of the Secretary-General and our distinguished briefers for sharing their important insights. The courageous leadership of Dr. Mukwege and Ms. Atim is truly inspiring and crucial. Norway commends them for their tireless work.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a violation of international humanitarian law and a violation and abuse of human rights — one which primarily affects women and girls, but also men and boys. It may also constitute a war crime or a crime against humanity. Crimes of this gravity cannot simply be accepted as a side effect of armed conflict.

Shortly after the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), the Conference on Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises brought together a wide range of actors, making hundreds of commitments to end sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises and conflict. Despite progress made, the recent Secretary-General's report (S/2021/312) confirms that sexual violence continues to be deliberately used as a tactic of war, torture and terror. These documented incidents represent just the tip of the iceberg. The report paints a harrowing picture of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Tigray. Women were also specifically targeted for their activism, including in Afghanistan, Colombia and Yemen. We call on all parties to implement the Secretary-General's recommendations.

We note in particular the commitment by the Government of Ethiopia to investigate the many accounts of brutal and systematic sexual violence in Tigray.

Credible and independent investigations are essential. We therefore call for full use to be made of the support offered by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten.

It is imperative that conflict-related sexual violence be addressed in ceasefire and peace agreements, including in the definition of prohibited acts, and in ensuring the monitoring and implementation of commitments. We must turn commitments into compliance and resolutions into results. Resolution 2467 (2019) calls for strengthened focus on justice and accountability and a survivor-centred approach. We must ensure its full implementation by keeping the rights of survivors, in all their diversity, at the forefront. Support to survivors must be age- and gender-sensitive and include access to health care, sexual and reproductive health and rights, psychosocial support and access to justice. And we must ensure survivors full, equal and meaningful participation. We must also tackle intersecting inequalities and root causes.

We condemn the targeting of people based on disabilities and actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. We are also appalled by the increase in conflict-related sexual violence against children. We reiterate that States carry the responsibility to protect women and children from rape and sexual violence.

As Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, we call on our fellow Council members to work to adopt strong and operational conclusions.

We also need more comprehensive, coordinated and targeted efforts by peace operations in combating sexual violence. This is why we supported the production of the policy and *Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, which provides practical guidance

to civilian, military and police components. We also look forward to the first report on peacekeeping missions' implementation of conflict-related sexual violence mandates. Thankfully, we already have examples of best practice to build on, including the ongoing work of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in supporting the implementation of the national action plan on conflict-related sexual violence through capacity-building and awareness-raising. We are proud to count Norwegian personnel among the United Nations police team supporting the South Sudanese police in investigating sexual and gender-based violence.

In conclusion, I would like to make four points on how Norway believes we should move forward.

First, we must ensure a survivor-centred approach — one that demands the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women and survivors, in all their diversity.

Secondly, protection against conflict-related sexual violence must remain a key priority for the Council, and we must make use of all means at our disposal. Sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for sanctions must be applied when applicable, and it should be a criterion in more sanction regimes. In this respect, we welcome the recent decision by the Yemen Sanctions Committee to list individuals on the basis of sexual violence.

Thirdly, our efforts must seek to prevent sexual violence. This includes fighting impunity. We must do more to ensure that perpetrators be brought to justice. We need an appropriate mechanism through which the Council can monitor compliance by parties to conflict.

Finally, we must maintain the momentum from the Oslo Conference to make the prevention of, and response to, sexual and gender-based violence key humanitarian priorities.

The Security Council must be a strong voice. We cannot allow our political commitments being reversed by the coronavirus disease.

Annex 14**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Gennady Kuzmin**

[Original: Russian]

At the outset, we would like to thank you for convening this meeting and to commend the contribution of the briefers to this discussion.

The Security Council gathers annually to discuss measures against conflict-related sexual violence. In their statements, speakers wholeheartedly condemn such crimes and reiterate our shared commitment to combat this abominable phenomenon. The Secretariat elaborates standardized statutory regulations and detailed plans to that end, engages vast expert capacity and puts to use the Organization's forces and facilities in international peacekeeping presences and special political missions.

The problem is real, and the international community realizes it. All Security Council Member States without exception agree that we must fight against this evil.

Then why is it the case that, year on year, the reports of the Secretary-General basically state the lack of progress on this issue? Why is it the case that the comprehensive, well-structured and thoroughly considered recommendations of the Special Representative actually contradict the reality on the ground? For example, what prevents the conflicting sides from "ensuring comprehensive and constructive participation of women, girls and victims of sexual violence ... in decision-making processes", as the report would suggest?

The answer is often very simple. It is the state of war that prevents them. It is the state of enmity and hatred in the society that is often propelled from the outside. It is the state of having no rights, no justice and no capable power institutions. Such a state is characterized by the rule of the gun, where might makes right.

We must do all we can to put an end to conflicts, eradicate their underlying causes and rebuild resilient societies. Only a resilient society can combat lawlessness and put an end to violence, including sexual violence.

We welcome the efforts of Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We appreciate her work to strengthen national capacities, promote dialogue with religious and other traditional leaders, address the stigmatization of victims of sexual violence and facilitate their rehabilitation. It is important that the humanitarian work of her Office be entirely free of political bias, where one party to a conflict is merely appeased and the crimes of the other are concealed. We therefore call on the authors of the report to be very careful when considering the list of actors with credible allegations of perpetrating sexual violence. All suspicions must be well substantiated, all facts double-checked and all sources of information identified.

Despite the extra challenges created by the pandemic, we have not lost hope that the current measures, including this debate, will help eradicate violence against civilians, including sexual violence, for the sake of international peace and security.

Annex 15

Statement by the Second Deputy Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Halimah DeShong

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. We also thank our briefers, Ms. Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mr. Mukwege, Ms. Atim and Ms. Attinger Colijn for their thoughtful, yet sobering briefings.

The world has been gripped by intersecting crises and inequalities of epic proportions. These conditions have resulted in increased rates of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, particularly against women and girls, and have compounded their suffering. Today, we recommit to ending the enduring inequalities, protracted conflicts and underdevelopment that contribute to unconscionable levels of conflict-related sexual violence. In addition to the social and economic repercussions of the coronavirus disease pandemic, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is facing a severe crisis of explosive volcanic eruptions. We therefore speak with an even deeper sense of pain, urgency and commitment to addressing the suffering of humankind.

First, we commend the invaluable contribution of women's civil society organizations. The women protection networks in Darfur, for example, facilitate referrals and work to enhance the profiling of perpetrators of sexual violence. Further, we condemn all attacks against women's civil society networks.

Secondly, underreporting, resulting from fear of reprisals and shame, remains an enduring challenge. With that in mind, we call for survivor-centred responses that prioritize women's and girls' needs at various stages of their trauma and recovery experience. Women's civil society and community organizations that work to prevent and respond to sexual violence must be consistently funded and supported, as they perform critical prevention, response and recovery work with women, girls and children.

We take note of several important actions taken to address conflict-related sexual violence. Among these are the establishment of one-stop centres in South Sudan; specialized courts in all 34 provinces in Afghanistan, with 32 headed by women; the launch, by the United Nations, of the sexual and gender-based violence helpline in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and the ongoing support of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, providing model legislative guidance to national authorities with regard to conflict-related sexual violence.

Despite the important progress made, effective, comprehensive, women- and girl-led actions to combat conflict-related sexual violence remain elusive. That brings me to my third point, which is also related to the ongoing pandemic — with funding being divested towards pandemic-mitigation measures, we urge authorities to designate sexual and gender-based violence responses as central to pandemic recovery, planning and funding. Displaced and refugee women and girls are among the most affected during the pandemic. We call for the inclusion or retention of key health and psychosocial services as national emergency response plans are adapted over time. Such plans must also include adequate socioeconomic recovery and reintegration support.

Further, continued collaboration between regional organizations and the United Nations to support the development, operationalization and adaptation of survivor-centred national action plans remains crucial. Diverse women and girls, civil society and community organizers must occupy central roles in decision-making, budgeting,

design, implementation and the monitoring of compliance. The enduring effects of rape, trafficking, sexual slavery and terrorism against women and girls by armed terrorist groups operating across borders, further emphasize the need for national, regional and multilateral cooperation. That includes joint cross-border monitoring and response capabilities. Ongoing regional and multilateral support to strengthen national accountability frameworks is necessary — not only to end impunity, but also to ensure reparations for survivors and victims.

Finally, mandate authorizations, renewals and implementation must prioritize gender analysis and gender justice, with the requisite focus on participation, prevention, protection, relief and recovery, including the consistent deployment of women protection advisers to all peacekeeping and political missions. Eliminating conflict-related sexual violence requires multilevel, multi-actor approaches that are tied to broader gender-responsive security and development actions.

Annex 16**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations**

At the outset, I would like to thank all the briefers for their insightful comments, and would like to commend, in particular, the inclusive approach in the selection of today's briefers.

Conflicts always have a devastating impact on all civilians, without exception. However, we must recognize the disproportionate impact of conflicts on women and girls:

First, as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312) indicates, in many instances women and girls are utilized as a weapon of war or terrorism during conflict. Such systematic targeting seeks to violate the dignity of women and girls by subjecting them to sexual and gender-based violence such as rape, trafficking and sexual slavery.

Secondly, the crimes committed against them are often not recognized as a tactic of war or terrorism but rather as simple acts of violence. As a result, the perpetrators are not properly held accountable in a manner that reflects the seriousness of the crime.

Thirdly, access to justice and remedies is largely hampered by the absence of gender-responsive services and the prominence of negative social norms that blame and stigmatize victims. This reveals the multi-layered nature of violations against the survivors, which start with the conflict itself and play out even in post-conflict settings due to a lack of accountability.

Finally, women and girls are often marginalized in post-conflict peace processes, accounting for only 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators and 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes around the world. For that reason, all post-conflict peace processes are likely to overlook the particular vulnerabilities, grievances and needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings, including due consideration for the sexual and gender-based violence against them.

First and foremost, the best way to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence is to put an end to conflicts themselves and to build peaceful and resilient societies. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and the recommendation contained in his report to immediately cease all acts of sexual violence in conflict, in keeping with resolution 2532 (2020), drafted by Tunisia and France.

Tunisia strongly believes in a survivor-centred approach. In that regard, we reiterate that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence do not constitute a homogeneous group and that they require tailored measures and services that respond to their varying needs and contexts. Most importantly, we need to provide and sufficiently fund psychological, legal and medical service, including with regard to victims' sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as socioeconomic opportunities to ensure the reintegration and empowerment of survivors.

We also need to put an end to impunity by delivering justice to the victims and survivors in a manner that restores their rights and preserves their dignity. It is essential to put in place and strengthen robust national legal and judicial measures, as well as targeted United Nations sanctions that reflect the seriousness of these heinous crimes. Tunisia is committed to putting a stronger emphasis on conflict-related sexual violence committed by terrorist groups as a tactic of terrorism, which we included in the presidential statement adopted in January (S/PRST/2021/1) and

will continue to advocate for during the ongoing review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as well as in other upcoming processes for different subsidiary organs of the Security Council.

It is important to reflect on why sexual violence, among other things, is being weaponized during conflict. We see this phenomenon as being deeply rooted in historical and structural gender inequalities and unequal power relations between men and women. Patriarchal and negative social norms increase the vulnerability of women and girls in the face of conflict. We can therefore prevent conflict-related sexual violence by tackling its underlying drivers, promoting gender equality and human rights, bringing national legislations in line with international norms and standards and implementing the existing normative framework on women and peace and security.

That undertaking requires a whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach where civil society organizations, local communities, feminist groups, girls' and youth-led organizations, the private sector and all other relevant stakeholders are given an active role as partners to promote gender equality and the full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in all public and private spheres. In that regard, it is of the utmost importance to ensure the continuity of the necessary funding mechanisms within the United Nations system and for civil society actors.

Annex 17

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward

We thank today's briefers for their compelling and informative testimonies. The United Kingdom is proud to be a partner in this vital work.

Sexual violence is a feature of conflict in countries around the world. We are particularly concerned about the credible and widely corroborated reports of rape and sexual violence in Tigray. We urge Ethiopia to work closely with the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to address that issue.

Ms. Caroline Atim's briefing reminded us, too, of the disproportionate impact of gender-based violence on women and girls in South Sudan. There have been ambitious commitments, but little peace dividends for women and girls in South Sudan. We look to South Sudan to expedite the establishment of the Hybrid Court, and to partner with the United Nations to deliver justice.

In these and other post-conflict situations, survivors carry the effects of their trauma, while perpetrators most often walk free. I would like to make several remarks in that regard.

First, I want to underline the United Kingdom's commitment to tackling sexual violence in conflict. We are the only country with a Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, with a dedicated team and funding. Since 2012, we have committed over £48 million to supporting survivors, tackling stigma and reducing impunity, supporting projects across 29 countries.

Secondly, I want to emphasize, as we have heard from our speakers, the importance of a survivor-centred and human-rights-based approach that prioritizes the rights and needs of survivors. That includes the right to accessible sexual and reproductive health-care services and access to justice that take into account the specific needs of victims and survivors living with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex individuals and other at-risk groups.

The United Kingdom has committed £1.3 million to the Global Survivors Fund, run by Mr. Mukwege, which works to ensure that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have access to reparations and other forms of redress in conflict and post-conflict countries.

In the past year, the United Kingdom has also launched two key tools to support survivors. First, in June, Lord Ahmad, the Prime Minister's Special Representative, launched the draft Global Code of Conduct for Investigating and Documenting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, also known as the Murad Code, for global consultations. This is a code of behaviour for those collecting evidence in order to respect survivors' rights and ensure investigations are safer, more ethical and more effective.

Secondly, in November, Lord Ahmad inaugurated the Declaration of humanity by leaders of faith and leaders of belief, which calls for the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and denounces the stigma faced by survivors, including children born of rape.

Finally, alongside supporting survivors, we must do all we can to ensure accountability for the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said, zero tolerance cannot have zero consequences.

Resolution 2564 (2021), the recent resolution imposing sanctions against Sultan Zabin demonstrated that the international community can and will take action against perpetrators of torture and sexual violence in conflict.

But there is more we can do to strengthen accountability for these crimes in United Nations-supported international and hybrid criminal courts and tribunals so that perpetrators are justly prosecuted.

As we have heard, there are millions today who are affected by conflict-related sexual violence — survivors, children born of sexual violence, families and entire communities. I thank the presidency for convening this debate and our briefers for highlighting the problem and what can be done. I assure the Council of our continuing support to end the use of sexual violence in conflict and as a weapon of war.

Annex 18**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield**

I thank the President for convening this very important debate. I want to also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for her remarks and comments, as well as all of the briefers for their interventions today. It is great to see Mr. Mukwege, as it has been a while since we have seen each other.

The United States greatly appreciates the work of the United Nations on this issue and, in particular, the work done by the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We are extremely proud of our continued support for the Office of the Special Representative and our contributions to her Office in order to help facilitate their important work, and we strongly encourage other Member States to provide support.

Around the world, sexual violence is used as a deliberate tactic in armed conflict — whether to terrorize, destabilize or break bonds within communities. That makes conflict-related sexual violence a security issue and a human rights issue, and it demands collective action.

In particular, right now the Security Council needs to pay attention to the deeply disturbing reports of mass sexual violence occurring in Ethiopia's Tigray region. We as the Council must address reports of women being forced by military elements to have sex for basic commodities, and reports of sexual violence against women and girls in refugee camps, among other horrific information. The international community must work to ensure that all those involved respect their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The international community must establish immediate protection mechanisms, humanitarian aid and other needed services for survivors. Independent, credible investigations must be conducted to hold accountable the perpetrators of those and other human rights abuses and violations committed in Tigray.

In Burma, where the same military leaders responsible for a campaign of sexual violence in Rakhine state have now returned to power, women and girls across the country are facing even graver risks.

Of course, gender-based violence is a crisis around the world. One in every three women will experience physical or sexual violence in her lifetime. That is beyond a crisis; that is a calamity. The pandemic has made the situation even more dire. Social isolation and financial desperation have led to a spike in gender-based violence this past year, especially intimate partner violence and violence against girls. So I should like to talk about three ways in which we can address that emergency.

First, we can help prevent sexual violence by elevating women and putting them into positions of power. It is absolutely essential that women fully, equally and meaningfully participate in peace and security processes. After all, women make the world more peaceful. That is not anecdotal; that is a fact. By promoting women's participation and leadership — in politics, in mediations and in negotiations — we promote more security and peace. And by doing that, we will help prevent sexual violence in conflict from ever happening in the first place.

Secondly, the best way to address gender-based violence after it happens, especially when it is used as a weapon of war, is to take a survivor-centred approach. That means providing survivors with access to medical care, particularly clinical management of rape, psychosocial support and sexual and reproductive health services. It also means providing survivors with social support and legal services,

all to create a supportive environment in which a survivor's rights are respected and the survivor is treated with dignity and respect.

For our part, President Biden has committed the United States to providing sexual and reproductive health care and services for women around the world, especially women who have been impacted by conflict-related sexual violence.

Thirdly and finally, we must pay special attention to underexamined and underreported forms of sexual violence. In many places, for example, the LGBTQI+ community faces outsized levels of sexual violence. We must more closely examine what can be done to safely identify survivors and provide the necessary support for that community, particularly medical care and psychosocial support.

Also underreported and underexamined is the impact of sexual violence on men and boys. In Afghanistan, for example, the terrible practice of bacha bazi — the commercial and sexual exploitation of boys — is well documented as occurring within the security forces and is exacerbated by the country's conflict. The scourge of sexual violence must be eradicated in all of its forms — especially as a weapon of war.

Speaking more broadly on gender-based violence, the United States has called the increased rate of violence over the last year “the shadow pandemic”. Well, I would say that it is time to bring gender-based violence out of the shadows. Together we have to work to shine a light on it. Let us treat this like an emergency, with the urgency that it demands.

Annex 19**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

We would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten for her insightful briefing. We would also like to thank the other briefers for bringing their valuable experiences to the discussion.

Over the years, sexual violence continues to occur in global conflicts, with traumatizing impacts on the victims, particularly vulnerable women and girls.

We are concerned about the tremendous suffering of victims as a result of the physical and psychological injuries, discrimination and social exclusion associated with sexual violence. Lacking access to education, livelihood and economic opportunities, those victims are also easily subject to stigmatization, human trafficking and armed-group and terrorist recruitment, which prolong the vicious circle of violence and suffering.

While the international community has given increasing attention to and made numerous commitments with respect to the issue, it is regrettable that the situation in the past year has remained alarming and has been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. As reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312), among others, gender-based inequality, which is a root cause and driver of sexual violence in times of conflict, has been amplified. The pursuit of justice and redress has been further complicated, while new concerns on gender-specific protection have arisen.

Against that backdrop, we agree with many of the points raised by other members and would like to stress the following.

First, we emphasize the need to take a comprehensive perspective and redouble our efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict. In that regard, timely assistance and access to services are of critical importance to victims of sexual violence. These may include health care, psychological and legal support, vocational training, employment opportunities and socioeconomic reintegration. At the same time, measures aimed at addressing the root causes of sexual violence in conflict remain critical, too. In that process, the consideration of a survivor-centred approach, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, should always be the focus.

Secondly, Viet Nam underscores the importance of promoting gender equality and women's political, social and economic empowerment. We recognize the link between sexual violence and gender inequality. The full and equal participation of women in decision-making and peace processes is a prerequisite for the prevention of conflict and sexual violence in conflict. That would ensure that national policies could adequately address the needs and interests of victims, raise greater awareness and overcome stigma and discrimination. It is also important to enhance women's economic empowerment to assist victims in their recovery and reintegration.

Thirdly, while States have the primary responsibility in that regard, the international community, particularly United Nations agencies, programmes and peacekeeping missions, can provide much-needed development assistance, capacity-building, technical support and training. We encourage the inclusion of conflict-related sexual violence prevention and response in mandate authorizations and renewals of peace operations as well as the accelerated deployment of women's protection advisers to United Nations peace operations and offices where mandated. Women protection advisers, who work closely among communities on the ground, should be provided with the resources necessary to fulfil their tasks in peacekeeping operations.

We also encourage the international community to undertake a united and collective response in order to effectively implement the existing normative frameworks on the women and peace and security agenda and on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. Victims of sexual violence can become resilient survivors when they are supported and empowered.

Viet Nam stands ready to engage with Member States and the relevant United Nations agencies in that endeavour.

Annex 20

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Adela Raz

I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Viet Nam for holding this important meeting of the Security Council on sexual violence in conflict. I would also like to thank Ms. Pramila Patten, Dr. Denis Mukwege, Ms. Caroline Atim and Ms. Beatrix Attinger Colijn for their very valuable interventions.

Addressing sexual violence in conflict, particularly through the protection of women and girls, is an urgent and timely topic of discussion for the Council. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated existing violence and underlined the need for States to enhance progress on the protection of women and girls. While the United Nations, including the Security Council, has worked to address this problem through action on the ground and the adoption of landmark Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2467 (2019), more effort is urgently needed.

Before the pandemic, the Afghan Government had made great strides in working to address this issue, including by mainstreaming the women and peace and security agenda throughout its activities. Our national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) has effectively worked to translate our international commitments and constitutional values into actionable policies and programmes that have aimed to empower women in our peace and security efforts while combating the problem of conflict-related sexual violence.

Most notably, we have seen the implementation of a reformed penal code, which entered into force in February 2018, and a subsequent law on the elimination of violence against women. That has led to enhanced criminal accountability on issues of violence against women through specialized prosecution offices in all 34 provinces and a zero-tolerance approach on this matter. Our action plan also resulted in an expansion of the role of women in the judiciary and the security sectors through efforts led by the Afghanistan Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission. Their work has led to an increase in the number of female prosecutors and judges, and recruits in our armed forces and national police.

We have also focused on assisting survivors of sexual violence. For example, we have established family guidance centres throughout the country to provide survivors with legal advice, health and psychosocial services. The Government has also worked to educate various segments of the population on the importance of eliminating domestic violence, particularly violence against women. That has included lectures by religious figures and other actors on the ground, including elements of civil society.

The Government has also redoubled its efforts to ensure that women can access referral mechanisms and other tools to serve them during these difficult times of COVID-19. To expand access to justice and protection, we have begun offering services via chat, text and telephone and have hosted a radio programme with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to communicate the relevant information and messages on domestic safety.

Afghanistan has also taken concrete steps to implement the Secretary-General's appeal for peace in the home on the ground. The Ministry of Women's Affairs has led a series of campaigns under the theme "Make Afghanistan free of violence through cohesion, coordination, financial support, and accountability". We have also begun working with the Spotlight Initiative following its recent launch in Central Asia and Afghanistan and remain confident that that partnership will help

improve the safety of Afghan women. At the global level, Afghanistan is proud to have joined and actively engaged with the Group of Friends for the elimination of violence against women and girls.

In addition to challenges from the pandemic, we have observed a sharp increase in targeted attacks against women since the beginning of the peace process. Such attacks seek to silence women's voices as negotiations move forward. In the past couple of months, we have seen attacks against a female member of our negotiating team, Supreme Court judges, journalists and other prominent women from our civil society. Those cowardly attacks underscore the necessity of not just maintaining but promoting and expanding the rights and protections women in Afghanistan enjoy, and ensuring the effective and consequential participation of women throughout peace negotiations in Afghanistan.

Addressing sexual violence in conflict and protecting women and girls requires a cohesive and coordinated approach that brings the international community together around the same message. As such, we call on the international community and all Member States to redouble efforts to empower women, particularly those in conflict-affected countries, and to eliminate all violence against women and girls. We must emphasize that the gains of women in Afghanistan and elsewhere are not negotiable and that the international community is united in its efforts to protect progress and enhance the long-term safety of all those vulnerable to these heinous acts.

Annex 21**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations, Besiana Kadare**

The use of sexual violence in conflict as a devastating tactic of war and terrorism has been recognized as a legitimate threat to peace that requires an operational security and justice response. Owing to the pervasive way in which it impedes reconciliation and undermines the prospect of peace and reconstruction, sexual violence is among the worst of crimes.

In terms of international legal and normative instruments, we have a good global understanding of that scourge and the tools required to take significant action, including seven Security Council resolutions. But laws and resolutions do not mean much if in practice those crimes are left unpunished.

The unacceptable reality is that despite our collective efforts and international outrage, conflict-related sexual violence continues unabated and largely unpunished. In fact, as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312) shows, in some cases it has even escalated.

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has not only amplified gender-based inequality but has also demonstrated how fragile the achievements we have made in this field are. As a result of the pandemic, access to service provision for victims of sexual violence, including access to sexual and reproductive health care, has become more difficult.

As we are slowly starting to recover from the COVID-19 crisis, we should not forget that this pandemic is a gendered crisis. Hence it is imperative to include the survivors of sexual violence at all stages of decision-making processes and planning efforts. Building back better after the COVID-19 crisis should serve as a unique opportunity to build more gender-responsive institutions able to provide a survivor-centred approach. Survivors must be recognized as legitimate victims of conflict, entitled to equality before the law as well as reparations.

In order to effectively prevent such an atrocity crime from happening and to empower the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, we need to do more in four main areas.

The first area is acknowledging and documenting all cases where sexual violence has been used as a tactic of war and terrorism targeting civilians. We strongly believe that all victims of sexual violence in conflict, including men and boys, must be recognized and offered the support to which they are entitled. In that context, we encourage and support the further deployment of women's protection advisers in all United Nations field missions.

Secondly, we need to strengthen accountability and put an end to impunity for violations and abuses. That must be a priority for all of us, both within inside and outside the Council.

Thirdly, we need to achieve greater cooperation and synergies among Governments, United Nations agencies and civil society partners, especially to mobilize funds to support joint catalytic activities. In this context, we believe that the Conflict-related Sexual Violence Multi-Partner Trust Fund will help to advance the survivor-centred approach, address the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence and support comprehensive services for survivors and children born of wartime rape.

Fourthly, we need to establish and integrate monitoring arrangements and early-warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence into the mandates of all United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions.

Coming from a region that in the recent past has been the venue for major conflicts and human suffering, we have witnessed how sexual violence has been used as a tactic of war against civilians. In this context, I would like to mention the case of Kosovo, where civilian-targeted rape was deliberately and repeatedly used as a weapon during the war in the late 1990s. More than 20,000 survivors, isolated by stigma, discrimination and fear, still suffer the consequences in silence. The lack of accountability and recognition for such crimes remains a devastating legacy of this brutal conflict.

We regret that the current report of the Secretary-General continues to fail to mention Kosovo among the post-conflict countries that suffer the consequences of sexual crimes, and we call upon the Secretary-General to include Kosovo in future reports. This would help to acknowledge the survivors and to combat the prejudice and shame they face. It would also highlight Kosovo's valuable experience in supporting survivors as a good example for the region and beyond.

If elected to the Security Council for the 2022-2023 term, Albania will champion the women and peace and security agenda across the full breadth of the Council's work. We will also work closely with all like-minded countries to support the incorporation of sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion in United Nations sanctions regimes.

It is our collective responsibility to closely cooperate and take concrete actions to prevent sexual violence, protect survivors and bring perpetrators to justice. To foster deterrence, justice must be done — not only in the courtroom, but also in the community.

Annex 22**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Argentina thanks Viet Nam for organizing today's Security Council open debate and appreciates the briefings made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten; Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Mr. Denis Mukwege; and the Director of the South Sudan Women with Disabilities Network, Ms. Caroline Atim.

Argentina appreciates the efforts made in recent years by States Members of the United Nations, the United Nations itself, intergovernmental organizations and local and international civil society organizations to prevent and respond to sexual violence. We also continue to strongly support the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and reiterate our support for their work, which is firmly rooted in the women and peace and security agenda, which finds its origins in resolution 1325 (2000).

We especially welcome the latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312). In particular, we share the concern that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has amplified gender inequality, which is one of the main causes of sexual violence in both conflict and peace contexts, as well as the impact that COVID-19 has had on the access of survivors of sexual violence to essential health and assistance services. We are also concerned about the additional complications that the pandemic has generated in the search for justice and reparation for victims following the implementation of measures that have affected the normal functioning of mechanisms in judicial and accountability systems.

Argentina categorically condemns acts of sexual violence in armed conflict, supports efforts aimed at preventing them and promotes accountability and punishment of those responsible. It is for these reasons that Argentina has supported all resolutions adopted since resolution 1325 (2000) to combat sexual violence in conflict as well as specific Council resolutions complementary to it, namely, resolutions 1820 (2008), 2242 (2015) and 2467 (2019). In this regard, we assist and support the work being done to establish zero tolerance for acts of sexual violence in conflict. Argentina believes it is crucial to prevent and punish the use and threat of sexual violence perpetrated by various actors and armed groups, both State and non-State alike.

With respect to prevention, our country understands that one of the key actions in this context is addressing the risk factors and underlying conditions that place women and certain groups in situations of greater vulnerability and risk to sexual violence, structural discrimination and forms of gender-based violence, with climates of impunity and insecurity acting as triggers for this serious crime. With regard to acts of sexual violence per se, Argentina believes that such conduct is a crime of the utmost gravity that must be combated within legal frameworks and the use of the tools and mechanisms available, including the sanctions regimes of the Security Council, which should include sexual violence as a specific criterion for the imposition of sanctions, and the referral of cases to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. With respect to access to justice and accountability for the commission of these crimes, Argentina believes that it is essential to establish greater cooperation and share good practices in the areas of investigation, assistance to victims, extradition and legal assistance, in order to put an end to the climate of impunity that contributes to the proliferation of these crimes.

In pursuit of these objectives, our country is a member of the international cooperation mechanism known as Justice Rapid Response, whose purpose is to provide prompt assistance to States and international organizations that require the assistance of experts in the gathering of information that may be useful in the investigation and prosecution of international crimes. In this context, Argentina highly values its partnership and joint work with UN-Women, which guarantees the inclusion of gender specialists in the investigation of crimes.

With regard to the protection of victims of sexual violence in conflict, Argentina understands that it is essential to create mechanisms that protect, contain, assist and reintegrate all survivors of such violations, in collaboration with women's organizations and other civil society organizations. This assistance should address the needs and protect the dignity and human rights of the victims through measures to eliminate the multiple forms of discrimination, marginalization and stigmatization that victims often suffer in socioeconomic and cultural processes of reintegration into their families and communities of origin.

The aforementioned elements should be taken into account when defining the mandates of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as in the peacebuilding efforts of the Security Council, within the framework of resolution 1325 (2000) and its complementary resolutions. Argentina would therefore like to stress the importance of having women protection advisers in peace operations in order to improve coordination and the quality of the information available for monitoring and preventing sexual violence in conflict.

It should also be noted that in the area of women and peace and security, Argentina is a member of the Council's Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, in Geneva, and has joined the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, promoted by the Canadian Government to ensure an increase in the number of women deployed in peace operations, mainly because these entities are considered to be suitable mechanisms for combating gender inequality, thereby undercutting one of the main sources of sexual violence in armed conflicts. Likewise, together with more than 80 countries, Argentina has joined the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

In conclusion, sexual violence in conflict situations constitutes one of the most abhorrent scourges to human dignity as it undermines efforts aimed at restoring international peace and security. As a corollary, Argentina believes that, even in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, further efforts must be made to combat this serious crime, taking into account the risk factors that contribute to it being committed, undoing structural discrimination and impunity, increasing cooperation in the investigation of and punishment for the crime, and building up mechanisms to assist, protect and reintegrate victims.

Annex 23**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, Mitchell Fifield**

Australia thanks Viet Nam for its ongoing leadership on the women and peace and security agenda, both at the Security Council and as 2020 Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Australia welcomes the analysis and recommendations presented in the Secretary-General's recent report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312).

The women and peace and security agenda remains crucial to meaningfully addressing sexual violence in conflict. It recognizes the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls and that gender inequality is a critical indicator of a country's risk of conflict and a direct cause of sexual violence. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, rebuilding better must integrate the voices and experiences of survivors who have suffered the effects of intersecting crises. We strongly encourage all parties to include these diverse voices in peacebuilding efforts, including those of Afghan women in the various processes under way in their country. Women are powerful agents of change and their full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in decision-making is essential to sustainable peace.

Australia remains deeply concerned that armed groups are using sexual violence as a tactic of war, particularly against women and girls, human rights defenders and individuals on the basis of their perceived political affiliation, sexual orientation or ethnicity. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the shadow pandemic of gender-based violence has been even more acute for those living in conflict, crisis and humanitarian settings, with increased risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Survivors' access to support services has concurrently been limited by lockdown measures, and the diversion of dedicated resources has compounded existing gendered institutional, structural and socioeconomic disadvantages.

A pervasive climate of impunity prevents survivors from reporting and gaining access to justice. We must build systems to hold perpetrators to account in a timely manner and reinforce the rule of law. Australia remains an active and steadfast advocate for this view across international forums, including with regard to past and recent atrocities in the conflict in Myanmar.

We strongly urge action that brings perpetrators of sexual violence to justice in the conflict there and in others where abuses occur. Our response must promote and protect the rights of women and girls. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights of central importance for all people in conflict and humanitarian settings, particularly for survivors of sexual violence. Access to the full range of support, including psychosocial, legal and sexual, reproductive and other health services, is critical for survivors' recovery, dignity and bodily autonomy.

Our actions must be survivor-centred and recognize the diversity of experiences and needs. They must not revictimize or retraumatize survivors seeking redress or remedy. For example, children born of rape and their mothers have particular needs, and male survivors, including boys, have their own barriers to gaining access to services.

Gender advisers in peace operations are critical to promoting gender-sensitive planning, resourcing and operations and to advancing prevention, protection, compliance, accountability and justice for survivors. As of the end of January 2021, Australia has trained over 290 military and civilian gender advisers for deployment in military, humanitarian, relief and recovery operations. We also support the Elsie

Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, promoting the meaningful representation of uniformed women across all levels of United Nations peace operations.

Australia is proud to work with diverse civil society organizations, multilateral institutions, academia and our regional and global partners to address sexual violence in conflict. We have promoted such innovative practices as the PeaceFem App, mapping gender provisions in peace agreements to ensure that practitioners effectively negotiate and integrate gender considerations into peace processes, including services and justice for sexual violence.

We are pleased to continue to fund UN-Women's Women, Peace and Security Global Facility and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in support of those working at the front lines of conflict and crises to advance gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda. We commend the United Nations for its own ongoing implementation of the women and peace and security and the youth, peace and security agendas.

Australia is a proud founding member of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies and a leader in supporting crisis-affected communities with life-saving sexual- and reproductive-health services and supplies, through partners including the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations Population Fund. We also advocate preserving and strengthening international commitments for sexual and reproductive health and rights through our co-chairing of the coordinating committee for the NEXUS Initiative for 2021.

As COVID-19 exacerbates risks for sexual violence in conflict, Australia continues to champion the rights of survivors, victims and those on the front lines of conflict, including women human rights defenders. We remain committed to the women and peace and security agenda and our collective efforts aimed at combating sexual violence in conflict as a pathway to sustainable peace and security.

Annex 24

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Rabab Fatima

I thank the Viet Nam presidency for organizing today's open debate on this important subject. I also express my sincere appreciation to all the briefers for their valuable remarks.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2021/312), which reveals deeply concerning trends of continued use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We are particularly disturbed by the lack of compliance with the Security Council's normative framework, by both State and non-State parties to conflicts. We support the Secretary-General's call for the Council to enforce compliance by "translating commitments into compliance and resolutions into results" (*ibid.*, para. 69).

We appreciate the focus of today's debate, which is the provision of assistance and access to services for the victims of sexual violence, including their needs for rehabilitation, justice and reintegration. It is evidently clear that the scars of sexual violence continue to destroy lives, and justice and redress for the victims remain elusive. Urgent reinforcement for a victim-centred response to sexual violence in conflict is needed.

Bangladesh itself went through the painful experience of sexual violence in conflict during its war of liberation in 1971. Over 2 million women bore its brunt.

Despite numerous challenges in rebuilding a war-ravaged country, we prioritized the needs of the victims, and in 1972, right after independence, a Women's Rehabilitation Board for relief for war-affected women and reconstruction was established. The Board collected information about the women and children abused during the war and arranged for their rehabilitation. This national board also addressed the physical condition of many women by offering safe deliveries of unwanted pregnancies that resulted from rape. The victims were also offered choices in respect of their reproductive health through emergency medical procedures.

It did not end there. The perpetrators of sexual violence have been brought to justice through a trial process. The contribution of victims has also been officially recognized.

Our commitment to this issue has also been reflected in our national action plan on women and peace and security. Taking into account Bangladesh's contribution to United Nations peace operations, the action plan includes specific provisions to increase the number of women peacekeepers and also to strengthen the knowledge and compliance of obligations related to sexual violence in conflict. The action plan recommends specific activities for updating and localizing modules and training materials for peacekeepers for the implementation of related mandates.

Our Government has also been providing critical support to the victims of sexual violence in Myanmar, as we are hosting now over a million forcibly displaced Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar, a large majority of whom are women and children. The national action plan recognizes the need for the capacity-building of local humanitarian actors on gender-responsive and victim-centred humanitarian actions. The humanitarian assistance programmes for the Rohingya people take into account the specific protection needs of victims of sexual violence.

In order for the Security Council to implement its relevant resolutions, particularly resolution 2467 (2019), we would like to suggest the following actions.

First, the compliance framework suggested by the Council's resolutions need to be fully implemented, especially by regular monitoring at the field level and

engagement by the Office of the Special Representative through United Nations country teams. We see merit in the recommendations to strengthen targeted measures against those who do not implement existing obligations and who commit, command or condone sexual violence in conflict. Coherence between sexual violence in conflict and targeted measures would indeed send a clear signal underlining the gravity of these violations.

Secondly, increased sensitivity towards the needs of victims, including their physical, psychological and livelihood needs, is critically important. Equally important is building the capacity of the State to cater to those needs. In this regard, relevant national institutions and stakeholders need to be empowered and supported so that the victims can be provided with rehabilitation and reintegration services. Mandated United Nations entities should be adequately resourced to support such measures.

Thirdly, accountability and justice systems need to be strengthened to address more effectively sexual violence, especially in the conflict and post-conflict contexts, as unaccounted for cases normalize the crime and build a culture of impunity. The national legal frameworks and justice mechanisms need to be strengthened. The Security Council needs to use its mandate and authority when national justice mechanisms are unable to deliver.

Fourthly, we believe that the issue of sexual violence cannot be addressed sustainably if the root causes are not addressed. Discrimination, persecution and subjugation weaken vulnerable and marginalized communities and reduce their ability to prevent incidents of sexual violence in the hands of the parties to conflicts. For that to change, the United Nations must prioritize support for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in specific country settings. Only 89 Member States have so far developed national action plans under resolution 1325 (2000). One practical method could be to pursue universalizing the national action plans more vigorously. National action plans could serve as an important yardstick to measure progress.

Finally, other United Nations mechanisms should complement the Council's work on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. The sexual violence in conflict commitments need to be internalized by the entire United Nations system, including at the ground level, by the resident coordinators and other United Nations agencies in the country teams. This would address the capacity gaps in the security sector, justice system and overall political process for increasing women's participation at all levels of the peace process. Greater synergies are also needed between the mandated United Nations entities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women towards ensuring compliance with general recommendation No. 30, which obliges its 189 States parties to report on resolutions related to sexual violence in conflict.

Annex 25**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations**

Belgium thanks Viet Nam for organizing this important debate on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. My country welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312) and recommendations in this regard, and remains extremely concerned about the high prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the horrific acts of sexual violence in the Tigray region and many other cases mentioned in the report. They painfully demonstrate the need to intensify our efforts and strengthen the tools to put an end to these terrible human rights violations. We welcome the tireless efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, her Office, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and women's protection advisers in this regard.

In this context, Belgium wishes to draw attention to sexual violence against children affected by armed conflict. The Security Council has identified this as one of the six most serious violations. Belgium, as the previous chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, has given particular attention to the fight against rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. Data on sexual violence against children in conflict continue to be alarming and reported violations against children are increasing. Belgium has worked closely with other Member States, civil society and the United Nations system, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, to address this scourge.

Belgium also recalls the importance of one of the key elements of resolution 2467 (2019), namely, a survivor-centred approach. All mechanisms to combat sexual violence must focus on survivors in order to protect their rights, ensure justice and facilitate their rehabilitation. This includes comprehensive services and care for victims, including services related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, psychosocial services, legal assistance that supports survivors in their quest for redress and accountability, as well as gender-sensitive transitional justice mechanisms, reparations and socioeconomic support. Data collection is paramount to guiding these efforts. We all know that cases of sexual violence are systematically underreported owing to stigma, retaliation and insecurity. Therefore, it is crucial that survivors have a safe environment in which to come forward and seek redress.

Moreover, we cannot accept impunity. The perpetrators of these crimes must be brought to justice. This is an indispensable step in building a lasting peace. The fight against impunity, including the prevention of new crimes, is a long-standing objective of Belgian foreign policy.

We must obviously take into account the coronavirus disease crisis and its impact. In addition to well-known obstacles, such as stigma and the lack of access to essential services, the combination of the pandemic with conflict and displacement have further compounded the difficulties of survivors. Hard-won gains in support have been undermined by the redirection of funds and detour of international attention. Sustainable funding is essential. Belgium is proud to fund the conflict-related sexual violence multi-partner trust fund and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and to support specific programmes, such as the Programme de lutte contre la violence sexuelle en République démocratique du Congo, which takes a multisectoral approach that considers medical, psychosocial, legal and socioeconomic care.

Finally, we must realize that sexual violence crimes will stop only if we address the root causes of sexual violence. This paradigm shift translates on the ground into continued efforts for gender equality, the inclusion of women's empowerment at the heart of prevention measures and, more generally, increased support for civil society organizations and women's human rights defenders. Belgium wishes to reiterate its commitment to gender equality and to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights of women and girls.

Annex 26**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, Ronaldo Costa Filho**

First, allow me to congratulate the Vietnamese presidency of the Security Council on convening this important debate on sexual violence in conflict in the broader context of the women and peace and security agenda.

It is important to reiterate the message of unity of the international community against sexual violence in conflict and also to update the efforts undertaken by the Security Council to that effect since the last time this body met to address this pressing issue (see S/2020/727).

Sexual violence is a scourge regardless of where and when it takes place, but it is especially repulsive when used as a tactic and a weapon of war in conflict and post-conflict situations, whereby victims are generally more vulnerable and impunity tends to run amok.

While the United Nations has set up a working architecture to fight sexual violence in conflict, it is urgent that words uttered in the Security Council Chamber be translated into action on the ground. It is therefore incumbent on the organ tasked with maintaining international peace and security to use the toolkit at its disposal to prevent, avert and fight sexual violence in conflict. It is our hope that today's debate helps to identify gaps and loopholes where the Security Council can step in to prevent and combat sexual violence in conflict.

In its written statement presented on the occasion of the debate on the issue in July last year (S/2020/727, annex 18), Brazil pointed out that, among the manifold impacts on international peace and security, the coronavirus disease pandemic creates a challenging environment for survivors of sexual violence in conflict, including the risk of impunity for potential perpetrators.

While resolution 2467 (2019) demands concrete progress in fighting conflict-related sexual violence, resolution 2532 (2020) has paved the way for a necessary global ceasefire and the humanitarian pause during the efforts to combat the pandemic. It is imperative that their prescriptions be entirely followed through by all involved actors.

Brazil lends its support to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, established in 2009 with the goal of raising awareness and coordinating a system-wide response to the issue. It is only fitting that Special Envoy Pramila Patten addresses the Council in this debate, and we thank her for her insight, as well as her efforts.

Brazil also applauds various initiatives aimed at advancing standard procedures in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence, such as the Murad code. Moreover, Brazil fully endorses the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy, which provides a coherent framework to deal with sexual violence in the context of peacekeeping operations.

We are proud of the overall track record of Brazilian Blue Helmets in their performance, especially of their strict observance of conduct and discipline protocols. Brazilian predeployment practices are widely considered to be exemplary in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in the operational environments of peacekeeping operations.

If predeployment training plays an important role in inhibiting sexual violence in the context of peacekeeping, the deployment of women peacekeepers is also a major factor in deterring and combating such crimes. Women peacekeepers tend to be able

to reach out to more segments of the local population than their male counterparts. The presence of women Blue Helmets on the ground can encourage the reporting of cases of sexual violence and forge stronger ties between the peacekeeping operations and the communities. Hence, it is essential that the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028 be fully implemented, leading to the significant expansion of the number and proportion of uniformed women deployed in peacekeeping operations.

Another valuable instrument in preventing sexual violence in conflict is the deployment of gender advisers in peacekeeping operations. Brazil is especially proud of the contributions of two of its women peacekeepers — Commander Márcia Braga and Commander Carla Araújo — distinguished with the United Nations Military Gender Award, in 2018 and 2019, respectively, for promoting mixed teams in patrols of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, which have helped reduce sexual violence in that country.

Brazil remains deeply committed to the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda. It is our view that the Security Council ought to remain engaged and mobilized to fulfil without delay the promise of eliminating sexual violence in conflict.

Annex 27

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations, Lachezara Stoeva

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (annex 37) and the statement presented by Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (annex 28). I would also like to express our appreciation to Viet Nam for organizing this timely open debate. Bulgaria welcomes the focus on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, as well as the recently released report of the Secretary-General on this critical topic (S/2021/312), which has a strong emphasis on survivors.

While last year we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, the world also had to face an unprecedented pandemic. As recognized in the report of the Secretary-General, the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has demonstrated how delicate the progress in the field of women's rights is and that political commitments can be reversed, if we lose focus or redirect resources, as has been the case with the COVID-19 emergency. Moreover, the pandemic has amplified vulnerabilities and exacerbated gender inequality, which is one of the root causes of sexual violence, resulting in a global spike in sexual and gender-based violence, while further limiting access to essential services for survivors.

The Secretary-General's report indicates that women and girls have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, while women in displacement settings and in conflict-affected areas have been among the hardest hit and most difficult to reach in terms of support. This is why Bulgaria believes that it is crucial that survivors be at the very centre of our response, including by ensuring their sexual and reproductive health and rights. This is why we also need to address the nexus between trafficking in persons and conflict-related sexual violence.

Furthermore, we share the view of Special Representative Patten that we should also take firm action against reprisals against civil society organizations, for they provide critical support to survivors.

In 2020, Bulgaria joined the universal consensus on gender equality as a main predictor of peace by adopting its first national action plan on women and peace and security, for the period 2020 to 2025. This critical step illustrates my country's commitment to the women and peace and security agenda, while promoting a people-centred approach with regard to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned that, despite all our efforts, the occurrence and threat of conflict-related sexual violence persist in such high numbers, and are used as tactics of war, torture, terror and political repression. We need to galvanize support to stop impunity. In this regard, in December 2020, Bulgaria joined the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, which was conceived to coordinate efforts at the United Nations. Moreover, we support the Secretary-General's view on the establishment of survivor-centred transitional justice mechanisms in post-conflict settings, ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in their design and implementation. There are cases where sexual violence in conflict amounts to crime against humanity and should be addressed in the right context.

In conclusion, Bulgaria recognizes that gender inequalities exacerbate conflict-related sexual violence. Therefore, Member States need to achieve gender equality and realize women's full enjoyment of human rights, while also ensuring

women's full and equal participation. In this regard, Bulgaria remains committed to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and the promotion of the survivor-centred approach.

Annex 28**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations on Behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security**

This statement is delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, an informal network of 64 interested Member States, representing all five regional groups at the United Nations, and the European Union.

We thank Viet Nam for organizing this important debate on sexual violence in conflict. We welcome the most recent report of the Secretary General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312) and thank his Special Representative for her ongoing efforts. During this open debate, the Group would like to emphasize three main points.

First, the Group recognizes the ongoing and disproportionate impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on all victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, who are disproportionately women and girls. During this difficult time, their needs cannot be put on pause and must be taken into account in all aspects of the COVID-19 response. Appropriate and predictable funding for these aspects of pandemic responses is critical. Gender-responsive protection needs arising from the pandemic must be met and access to essential services ensured, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, in line with the survivor-centred and human rights-based approaches. We reiterate the importance of ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

Secondly, the Group is outraged by the persistent and widespread perpetration of sexual violence in conflict by State and non-State actors. Far too many people continue to be affected by the threat, occurrence or legacy of conflict-related sexual violence. We recognize that addressing conflict-related sexual violence has been made more complex by intersecting crises and intersecting inequalities. Such heinous acts must be put to an end. We must increase our collective efforts to prevent sexual violence and ensure that victims and survivors can access the comprehensive support they need to fully recover from these violations, meaningfully participate in decision-making on prevention and response and be able to reintegrate into their societies without fear of stigma or further abuse. During this open debate, the Group would notably like to highlight the importance of addressing the specific needs, perspectives and wishes of victims and survivors living with disabilities and those of the most vulnerable.

Thirdly, to address sexual violence in conflict, the Group reiterates the importance of prevention, fighting against impunity and ensuring accountability. This responsibility lies with us, the States Members of the United Nations. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that robust legal and institutional arrangements be in place to address sexual violence in armed conflict and that steps be taken to investigate and prosecute perpetrators. In this regard, we encourage the Security Council to look to explicitly incorporate and apply sexual violence as a designation criterion in United Nations sanction regimes in areas where such crimes are persistently perpetrated. We call for the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security.

In conclusion, the Group recognizes that inequalities, and in particular gender inequality, give rise to and exacerbate conflict-related sexual violence. It is therefore

incumbent upon all Member States to redouble their efforts to achieve gender equality, realize women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights and ensure they can all participate fully, equally and meaningfully in their societies.

Annex 29

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations

[Original: English and French]

It is over 20 years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) and first called on States and other parties to conflict to take special measures to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. There has been progress since then, including an improved understanding of the extent and multifaceted nature of such violence and, although insufficient by far, an increased number of prosecutions and convictions.

The impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic remind us of how fragile this progress is. While the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, terror and torture has continued, the pandemic has further complicated the pursuit of accountability and justice. The pandemic has created new, gender-specific protection concerns, including those linked to curfews, checkpoints and border closures, and has restricted the operating space for organizations delivering medical, psychosocial and legal services to victims and survivors. We must do better, and we must stay focused on addressing the gaps.

As Member States, we must investigate credible allegations and hold perpetrators to account, allow unhindered access for independent third parties to document violations and provide comprehensive support and meaningful justice for victims and survivors.

We must also address the root causes of such violence. Whether acts of sexual and gender-based violence constitute conflict-related sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment or other types of sexual and gender-based violence, they represent an abuse of power. Often, these acts are also an expression of misogyny, intolerance, discrimination and racism, and sociocultural norms that condone, enable and perpetuate sexual and gender-based violence.

Too often, victims and survivors are targeted on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. We welcome the participation of the LGBTI Core Group, of which Canada is a member, in this open debate — a first in the Security Council. This is real progress that will bring much-needed attention in the Security Council to the issue of conflict-related sexual violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

Canada thanks the NGO Working Group for facilitating the input of a representative from the South Sudan Women with Disabilities Network to share her expertise with the Council. Her account highlights the importance of an intersectional approach in addressing conflict-related sexual violence, and of a response informed by all victims and survivors.

Gender inequality, conflict and fragility are inextricably linked. Almost all countries that feature at the bottom of global gender equality indexes are also fragile or conflict-affected. Inclusive and gender-equal societies are safer for everyone. Many of the best examples of leadership during the pandemic came from women. Yet women led fewer than 7 per cent of countries at the pandemic's onset, and a survey of 30 countries with COVID-19 task forces showed that only 24 per cent of members were women. In conflict-affected countries, they represented 18 per cent.

Canada is proud to co-lead the Generation Equality Forum's Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership and to be a catalytic member of its Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Assistance Compact. The Generation Equality

Forum is a unique civil society-centred initiative that will secure a set of concrete, ambitious and transformative commitments to achieve progress towards gender equality.

Canada's feminist foreign policy seeks to ensure that human rights, gender equality, diversity and inclusion are front and centre in all our international efforts and engagements. This includes efforts to advance women's participation and leadership in conflict resolution, United Nations peace operations and peacebuilding.

Canada launched an advocacy campaign this year — Peace by Her — to recognize, support, protect and include women peacebuilders. Too often, women peacebuilders lack adequate funding and are generally underrecognized, excluded from formal peace processes and targeted by gender-based threats and violence for their work building peace and fighting repression. In addition to this campaign, Canada is providing \$5 million specifically to support grass-roots women peacebuilders.

Canada also seeks to prevent sexual and gender-based violence at home, including by addressing the disproportionate levels of violence targeting indigenous women and girls. Ending all forms of gender-based violence and systemic discrimination against indigenous women and girls and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual plus people in Canada is an integral part of the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation.

Lastly, Canada commends the Secretary-General for his report (S/2021/312) and encourages the Security Council to follow its recommendations, including to continue to incorporate sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for sanctions, including when used as reprisal against women in public and political life; continue to invite the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to share information with sanctions committees; and to support the accelerated deployment of women protection advisers to peace operations.

These recommendations are crucial for achieving greater coherence to, and efficiency in, the United Nations response to conflict-related sexual violence.

Annex 30

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Chile the United Nations

[Original: Spanish]

Chile wishes to thank the Permanent Mission of Viet Nam for convening the Security Council to consider the issue of sexual violence in conflict.

Our country associates itself with the statements submitted in writing by the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (annex 28) and the LGBTI Core Group (annex 70), which today makes its first intervention in the Security Council.

At the outset, Chile expresses its concern regarding the situation of victims of sexual violence in conflict, since, as the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/312) clearly indicates, the figures therein are but the tip of the iceberg. However, what we do know for sure indicates that sexual violence in conflict, including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriage and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence, continues, as does the impunity perpetrators enjoy.

Such criminal attacks against the integrity and human rights of the their victims, especially when used as a brutal tactics of war, have a range of devastating consequences on survivors and their families, a situation exacerbated for women and girls in particular with the outbreak of the pandemic.

Moreover, it is worrisome that 70 per cent of the parties listed as perpetrators of sexual violence in conflicts in the annex to the Secretary-General's report, despite recognition and condemnation by the international community for violating their victims' human rights in the contexts of armed conflict, are persistent perpetrators, who for five or more years have not taken reparation measures or shown a change in behaviour. This not only reflects the long way to go in terms of accountability, but also leaves much to be said about the commitment of these actors to reducing and preventing sexual violence.

Against this alarming backdrop, Chile expresses its repudiation and condemnation of all acts of sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict situations and as tactics of war, which threaten the right of all people to a life of dignity, and our collective peace and security. At the same time, it is important to address the way in which sexual violence is used in conflicts, as well as its various implications, impacts and consequences for victims and survivors.

In addition, it should be noted that, for monitoring and reporting purposes, it is clear that the number of incidents of sexual violence reported in conflict situations increases significantly as peacekeeping and humanitarian operations increase their presence on the ground. This shows that, in order to make informed decisions, it is essential to strengthen the experience and capacity of child and women's protection personnel to safely and ethically document accurate, reliable and timely information, disaggregated by sex, on sexual violence in conflict situations.

In the words of the Secretary-General:

"The pandemic demands a paradigm shift: efforts must be made to silence the guns and amplify the voices of women peacebuilders, as well as to invest in public welfare rather than in the instruments of warfare. In this context, service delivery is not a secondary issue, but rather the ultimate expression of political will." (S/2021/312, para. 4)

In that regard, it is a priority to ensure that the rights of survivors be respected and that all victims of sexual violence have access to justice, assistance, compensation

and comprehensive support and reparation systems. This includes access to comprehensive specialized services, including psychosocial services, health-care and sexual and reproductive health services and livelihood support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, tailored to their needs and provided without discrimination and with due consideration.

Finally, given the urgency of combating sexual violence in conflict, it is necessary to move from aspirations to obligations, and from commitments to implementation. Therefore, Chile fully supports the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda to increase the support and reparations to survivors and their empowerment, including by increasing the full, equitable and meaningful participation of local women in negotiation and peacebuilding processes and decision-making with regard to peace and security at all levels. Chile also reiterates the need to address and eradicate the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence, including in conflict situations, particularly in the context of the pandemic, and to ensure that those responsible be held accountable for their actions.

Annex 31

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations, Maritza Chan Valverde

I thank the Permanent Mission of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam as President of the Security Council for the month of April for organizing this open debate on women and peace and security, which aims to highlight the brutality and devastation of sexual violence in conflict. I would also like to thank the briefers for their valuable insights on this pressing issue. Costa Rica reiterates its unwavering support to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and its mission.

Costa Rica aligns itself with the statement submitted by Argentina and the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of the LGBTI Core Group (annex 70).

Despite the increased international recognition of the serious impact that sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations poses to international peace and security, initiatives to prevent or mitigate these hideous acts continue to fall short. Women and girls, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community, and other vulnerable groups continue to be targeted with sexual and gender-based violence. Although resolution 1820 (2008) has led to remarkable progress in addressing sexual violence in conflict, lagging implementation and narrow interpretations of what constitutes conflict-related sexual violence continue to limit its impact. In this regard, Costa Rica would like to stress three key points.

First, conflict-related sexual violence is not merely a women's issue, but a security issue with much wider peace and security implications than particular instances of rape. This point is particularly important for Costa Rica as we strive to link such issues to other components of the broader gender equality and human security agenda, including those established by Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16. Not only can rape serve as a precursor to conflict, a diagnostic of pre-conflict conditions and a symptom of impunity, it is also evidence of a weak and insufficient security sector. In this regard, Costa Rica urges that conflict-related sexual violence should be addressed as a central aspect of any peace agreement. This includes ensuring that crimes of sexual violence not be amnestied and that victims receive the reparations and livelihood support that they need to rebuild their lives. Sexual violence considerations should be part of any peacebuilding, reconstruction, transitional justice and truth and reconciliation arrangements.

Secondly, there is a clear correlation between the prevention pillar of the women and peace and security agenda and disarmament and arms control. However, the ready availability of small arms undoubtedly facilitates grave crimes, such as sexual and gender-based violence, which are quite often committed at gunpoint. Better arms control mechanisms, including robust implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in addition to national laws and policies instituting gender-responsive small arms control, are essential to a more dependable security sector and, in turn, conflict prevention, protections against sexual violence and greater participation opportunities.

Thirdly, as Special Representative Pramila Patten has stated "sexual violence is not an inevitable byproduct of conflict. It is a preventable crime." Costa Rica regrets that impunity for wartime sexual violence continues to be the rule, that justice remains elusive and accountability the exception, as we have not seen a single successful prosecution for sexual violence committed by either State actors or terrorist groups. Truly ending impunity requires that all actors involved in the commission of atrocities, including State actors, be held to account. And it is every

State's responsibility to do so. Costa Rica urges the Security Council to consistently apply sanctions for sexual violence crimes as a critical aspect of deterrence and prevention, utilizing the stand-alone designation criteria on sexual violence, as articulated in resolution 2428 (2018). We also encourage referring those crimes to the International Criminal Court. Sanctions and judicial accountability measures must work together. Moreover, unless we adopt a holistic approach to policy and programming that deals with both the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence and its consequences, we risk simply being reactive, by which point it is already too late for the millions of victims and survivors.

As is often said by proponents of the women and peace and security agenda, there is no security without women's security and the aim is not only to protect women from violence, but to also encourage their active participation in political and economic life. A robust institutional framework will indubitably support such participation, as well as enhance protection mechanisms needed to eliminate such sexual violence in and out of conflict.

Annex 32

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations

This statement complements that of the European Union (annex 37) and offers some concrete suggestions towards combating sexual violence in conflict.

The prohibition of rape and other forms of sexual violence by customary international law, in both international and non-international armed conflicts, as well as the wide recognition of such acts as war crimes since the first codification of the laws of war in early military manuals and as crimes against humanity in current international legal practice, provides a strong framework for combating sexual violence in conflict. The fact that sexual violence continues to be prevalent as a weapon of war and humiliation points to non-implementation as one of our biggest failures. In addition to non-implementation, impunity can only be perceived by perpetrators as a shield. Having experienced aggression and conflict, Cyprus is well aware of the profound scars of sexual violence on women and girls and how these scars are compounded by impunity.

The Security Council has an indispensable role to play. First and foremost, it must do better at upholding the prohibition on the use of force. It can contribute to improved monitoring and the implementation of relevant international obligations, which it must accompany with repercussions for States and non-State actors who fail to uphold them. It should sanction perpetrators and routinely refer situations where atrocity crimes have been committed to the International Criminal Court. The Council should also reject peace agreements that confer amnesties for atrocity crimes, including sexual violence and other gender-related crimes. Furthermore, the Council should enhance the mandate of peacekeeping operations regarding the protection of civilians to, first, prevent sexual and gender-based violence and, secondly, to report such crimes. Peacekeeping operations could also assist the host country, without prejudice to its primary responsibility to protect civilians, with the collection of evidence, particularly in areas where the host Government does not exercise effective control.

We also need to step up our efforts as States. Sexual violence in conflict cannot be addressed in isolation, and neither can it be separated from the status of women and the deeply rooted gender inequalities afflicting them. The fact that patriarchy is still deeply rooted in our societies leaves women and girls vulnerable to different forms of discrimination and violence. So does the fact that the security sector continues to be male-dominated and often permeated by a culture of toxic masculinity. Many victims of sexual violence are left behind, without proper access to sexual and reproductive health care following their ordeal and without adequate psychosocial support. In addition, their chances of seeing any kind of justice or perpetrators being held accountable are negligible. Access to sexual and reproductive health, rehabilitation and reparation for victims, in line with their sexual and reproductive rights, should be enacted as an obligation by States. Sexual and reproductive health rights should also crystallize further as an international obligation for States. National jurisdictions should ensure that no statute of limitations exists for such crimes, and special prosecutors should be appointed within national criminal justice systems to prosecute sexual and gender-based violence during and post conflict. States should also hold their military commanders accountable for their own compliance and that of their subordinate combatants.

Lastly, international actors, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, international and regional organizations, as well as the United Nations and other peacekeeping operations, should assist the host State in the fight against impunity by facilitating the collection of evidence and the administration of justice.

Annex 33

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations

I deliver this statement on behalf of Norway, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

Allow me to thank Viet Nam for organizing today's open debate, as well as to express sincere gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten and her Office for their important work and ceaseless commitment to ending sexual violence in conflict.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a horrifying reality. It is always a violation of international humanitarian law and may constitute international crimes, such as war crimes or crimes against humanity. It is a pervasive and life-threatening health, human rights and protection issue. It remains a cruel tactic of war, terror, political repression and torture, aggravated by the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has gone hand in hand with a spike in sexual and gender-based violence worldwide. Survivors have lost access to essential services, training of judicial and security actors has been suspended, humanitarian access has been limited and sociocultural and structural impediments to reporting have been amplified. The needs of survivors at this challenging time should be taken into account, including in all aspects of COVID-19 responses.

We, the international community, have a responsibility to provide protection, uphold human rights and address these setbacks. The fight against sexual violence is key in our work to secure international peace and security.

In 2019, the Nordic countries, together with representatives from 100 States, organizations, survivors and experts, came together and made several hundred commitments to end sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises at the Oslo Conference, a number of which have been fulfilled. Much remains to be done in the field of the implementation of sexual violence responses and the wider women and peace and security agenda.

We must acknowledge the urgent need for concrete action. It is important to respond to the needs of victims and survivors in, among other places, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Yemen. We must not be afraid to try innovative approaches. We need to increase partnerships with local communities and with survivor-focused women's rights organizations. We must promote their safe and meaningful engagement and full, effective and meaningful participation in decision-making. This includes ensuring that they receive flexible and sustainable financial support.

We must ensure that efforts to fight sexual and gender-based violence are integrated into all action dealing with conflict situations and crises. To do this, survivors — women and girls, men and boys — must be at the centre of shaping prevention and response. As recognized in resolution 2467 (2019), a survivor-centred approach is crucial for preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, and survivors of sexual violence must receive non-discriminatory access to services, such as medical and psychosocial care. The Nordic countries call for a strengthening of services for survivors of sexual violence, including through ensuring comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as access to emergency contraception and the safe termination of pregnancies.

It is key to fight impunity and hold perpetrators accountable. We must establish credible systems of accountability, including by supporting law enforcement institutions to fight impunity, not least through the collection of documentation and evidence, as well as capacity-building for national judicial systems. We recall the

important role that the International Criminal Court plays at the international level, complementing the work undertaken at the national level. Accountability mechanisms must be informed by survivors. The Nordic countries call on the Security Council to include and apply sexual violence as a designation criterion in United Nations sanctions regimes in contexts where such crimes are continuously committed, as this can act like an effective deterrent.

Moreover, we must address root causes and adopt preventive measures to address the structural gender inequalities that underpin sexual and gender-based violence. To this end, we must focus on the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and an increased use of intersectional approaches — for example, gender, age and disability disaggregated data and knowledge to inform policy and action. Frameworks and mechanisms function only if they receive the necessary priority and funding. This calls for political will at the highest level.

Let me highlight the work of the global network of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies, which Denmark is currently leading. The network includes more than 90 member States, donors, United Nations organizations and non-governmental organizations that have come together to advocate and implement concrete actions to prevent and respond to conflict-related gender-based violence. We aim to amplify our voice and promote improved action on the ground; we hope that many more partners will join the network. The Nordic countries continue to advance these goals in our bilateral work, in collaboration with a wide range of partners and in our active multilateral cooperation.

Annex 34

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations

At the outset, we would like to thank Viet Nam for organizing this open debate on sexual violence in conflict. We also extend our appreciation to the briefers for their informative presentations.

Egypt welcomes the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, especially her cooperation with African States. We also welcome the measures undertaken by the Secretariat regarding increasing the number of women protection advisers in peacekeeping missions, as we believe that conflict resolution cannot be separated from efforts to empower women and girls, as well as to prevent and eliminate sexual violence in armed conflict.

In this regard and on the national level, Egypt is developing the first national plan to monitor and implement resolution 1325 (2000). The Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding organizes a series of workshops for Egyptian forces and forces from Arab and African countries participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations to train them to deal with crimes related to sexual violence in armed conflicts.

Egypt reiterates its commitment to the Secretary-General's initiative on zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. We will continue working with the Security Council and the Secretariat to eliminate all forms of violence against women in the context of peacekeeping operations.

His Excellency the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt was one of the first leaders to join the Circle of Leadership initiative to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Raising awareness about sexual exploitation and abuse is an integral part of the comprehensive training received by Egyptian forces prior to their deployment in peacekeeping operations.

Egypt takes pride in having initiated and championed the negotiation on General Assembly resolution 71/278, adopted on 10 March 2017, which advocated a system-wide response — involving United Nations and non-United Nations personnel — aimed at forging a collective commitment to the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the United Nations, prioritizing prevention, promoting accountability and providing justice for victims.

We also call for the mobilization of human and financial resources to assist implementation by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We believe that the situation of women under foreign occupation, especially the situation of Palestinian women, should not be left out of our discussions on women and peace and security.

Respect for the societal and cultural context of each country is paramount when implementing the women and peace and security agenda, especially when combatting sexual violence. We call on the Secretary-General to focus his reports on sexual violence only in zones of armed conflict. His reports should not include controversial concepts lacking international agreement.

We commend the efforts of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, especially those related to capacity-building for States in conflict or post-conflict situations.

Egypt would like to highlight the important role of building capacities of religious and local leaders to raise awareness regarding ending stigma for victims of sexual violence. While thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for her work, we call on her to resume the dialogue

launched with the Al-Azhar Al-Sharif University and the League of Arab States regarding the correction of religious discourse and the renouncement of violence against women and girls, especially in armed conflicts.

Annex 35**Statement by the Permanent Mission of El Salvador to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

El Salvador takes note of the latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312) and regrets that, despite the Secretary-General's appeal for a ceasefire in 2020 and significant progress in terms of prevention, violence in all its forms and manifestations, in particular sexual violence, continues to be used as a cruel tactic of war, terror, torture and political repression by some parties to conflict.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has significantly impacted the efforts of the various institutions and actors involved at various levels in the areas of prevention, accountability and access to justice relating to sexual violence. The socioeconomic impacts, social tensions and the weakening of institutions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have led to the possibility of new gaps opening up that may facilitate impunity, whereby survivors may face additional obstacles in fleeing situations of violence or in accessing protection orders and/or essential services that can save lives.

El Salvador firmly condemns all forms of violence, especially sexual violence in conflict, since such crimes make it more difficult to achieve sustainable peace and result in humiliation, stigma and irreparable life-long consequences for victims and survivors of this scourge, undermining or nullifying their full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. El Salvador welcomes the fact that sexual violence is considered no longer to be a secondary effect of conflict, but a real threat to international peace and security. We call on the international community and the United Nations system to move towards a survivor-centred gender and human rights approach that ensures those who survive sexual violence in conflict situations are not forgotten. In our view, it is essential that comprehensive support be provided to victims and survivors, including access to all essential services, in particular health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, as well as psychological and socioeconomic assistance, access to justice and effective legal resources and services, including protection, rehabilitation and reintegration.

In our view, the most vulnerable and marginalized people, such as women and girls, migrants and refugees, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, people with disabilities and the elderly, are more likely to be victims of violence, including sexual violence. In this regard, it is essential that those groups be included in support programmes, opportunities, access to services and justice, without any discrimination, and with full respect for their human dignity.

In the light of the foregoing, we commend resolution 2467 (2019) for having included, for first time, an approach focused on protecting and empowering survivors, while also encompassing justice and reparations for victims — components that have had positive effects in peacebuilding processes in a number of countries and regions. At the same time, we believe that survivors' experience should be built upon to better shape early-warning and prevention plans against future violations, which is why their full and effective inclusion when establishing such plans is essential.

We strongly support the Security Council's early-warning and reporting mechanisms on sexual violence, such as the periodic reports of the Secretary-General on each peace mission, the reports and activities of his Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security. We believe that their strengthening and financing should be priorities,

along with their inclusion as essential components of the mandates and accountability mechanisms of the peace missions mandated by the Security Council.

Once crimes have been identified, impunity is not an option; perpetrators must be held accountable so as to render justice to victims and survivors and to deter the repetition of such acts in future. It is the responsibility of States to investigate, prosecute and punish those who commit such crimes. International justice mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, play an important role to that end, such that closer cooperation between the Security Council and the International Criminal Court could be of great benefit.

In this regard, we underscore the need to step up cooperation, coordination and information-sharing between the United Nations system and regional and subregional organizations, which have a better understanding of local contexts and can therefore play an important role, offering solutions specific to each situation and context. Likewise, international support is crucial to advancing efforts to ensure that national laws are harmonized with international standards and that national institutions, including those entrusted with public security and justice, take gender issues into consideration in their efforts to promote equality, eradicate the scourge of sexual violence and prevent conflict.

El Salvador continues to strongly believe that prevention is the most effective response in combating conflict-related sexual violence, and that universal access to quality education, free from any discrimination, is an indispensable tool for reducing and eliminating cases, as well as for enhancing reporting. That is why, as a country that contributes troops and police to peacekeeping operations, we incorporate capacity-building in human rights, gender equality, sexual diversity, human trafficking and modern slavery, and the sexual exploitation and abuse of minors into our various predeployment trainings through both the Ministry of National Defence and the National Civil Police Directorate-General in the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

Our personnel also benefit from psychological training and evaluation, enabling them, beyond prevention, to support the processes launched by peace missions in various countries and regions around the world. These institutions also have internal codes of ethics, which, should sexual violence arise, provide for resolution through sanctions corresponding the severity of the incident.

Finally, El Salvador is committed to acting in the interests of peace and to making progress towards upholding full respect for the human rights of all persons, in support of the prevention and punishment of sexual violence, as well as accountability, access to justice and reparations for the victims and survivors of this scourge.

Annex 36

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations, Taye Atskeselassie Amde

We thank the presidency of Viet Nam for organizing this important open debate on “Women and peace and security: sexual violence in conflict”, as it remains imperative for us to continue to deliver on our commitments to addressing the issue of sexual violence against women, who make up half of humankind. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Pramila Patten, for her briefing and for her Office’s continued engagement with the Government of Ethiopia to facilitate support in areas of capacity-building and technical assistance pertinent to sexual violence.

We believe that this open debate presents an opportune moment to garner much-needed cooperation among all relevant stakeholders to create a mechanism that enhances the protection and safety of women in conflict areas and to tackle impunity for sexual violence in conflict. This also calls for the constructive engagement of the Security Council with Member States to resolve issues of conflict, which, more often than not, leave vulnerable sections of society, such as women and girls, to bear the brunt of sexual violence.

In this regard, we take note of the Secretary-General’s report (S/2021/312), which contains useful recommendations, particularly on the significance of engaging with national authorities and the provision of victim-centred support spanning different sectors, from the socioeconomic to security and protection. The Ethiopian Government realizes its primary responsibility for safeguarding the well-being of its citizens, as per its constitutional obligations, and will certainly make use of the recommendation contained in the report to that effect.

Nevertheless, we are concerned about parts of the report mentioning individuals allegedly being forced to rape members of their own family. This is an unsubstantiated allegation that diminishes the sincere effort exerted by my Government to investigate human rights abuses, including sexual violence, allegedly committed in the Tigray region and to bring perpetrators to justice.

The report also states that women were forced to have sex by military elements in exchange for basic commodities. This allegation does not accord with the military doctrine, training and discipline of our army — the very army whose members have for years been deployed to conflict-affected regions of the world to maintain peace and order. I want to assure the Council that my Government is investigating allegations of human rights abuses, including sexual violence, and it will certainly take corrective measures if there is any misconduct at all by members of the national army.

It would be only fair of me to share some facts to set the record straight pertaining to the causes of sexual violence against women in Tigray. The Tigray People’s Liberation Front clique, once it realized that it had lost its legitimacy both in the country’s political arena and in the fight against the federal Government, deliberately released more than 10,000 imprisoned criminals, aiming to harass and terrorize the people, thereby advancing its selfish political interests. The terrorist group cunningly managed to defame the federal defence forces, who have been doing nothing but upholding law and order, by fabricating unheard-of stories featuring immoral acts of sexual violence, such as the ones mentioned in the report.

The report, while overlooking the part played by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front group in the accounted allegations, also fails to recognize a range of human rights violations committed by the same group. Neither the brutally murdered

national defence army members nor the civilians, including women and children, who were gruesomely massacred in Mai-Kadra are mentioned in the report, which defies the principle of non-selectivity when considering human right issues.

The Ethiopian Government, however, feels strongly about the reported allegations. In this regard, a task force has been set up by relevant Government authorities and deployed to investigate the allegations. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, as part of its obligation to carry out independent investigations into abuses committed by all actors, has signed an agreement with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to jointly conduct investigations to ensure accountability and bring perpetrators to justice. In the meantime, I appeal to all concerned to recognize the steps taken and await the outcome of the investigation without making any judgments that might jeopardize the process.

I would like to further highlight some of the activities carried out in response to the reported sexual violence against women in Tigray. Based on assessments undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations agencies, capacity-building trainings have been given to civil servants, police officers, social workers and nurses on a number of issues covering emotional resilience, policy and legal frameworks to enable them provide psychosocial services to rape victims.

To assist victims, trainings on minimum initial-service package for sexual and reproductive health have also been given to medical directors, legal personnel, social workers and focal nurses in five hospitals to prevent the transmission of, and reduce morbidity and mortality due to, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies. Moreover, five one-stop centres have been established, in Mekelle, Aksum, Adigrat, Maychew and Shire towns, to provide access to holistic services for rape victims.

On prevention, a multisectoral task force has been established and regular consultations have been taking place with nine internally displaced person centres, religious leaders and local humanitarian organizations. An anti-gender violence unit has also been established in the police force and trainings have been given to 1,400 police force members to address service gaps and prevent sexual violence against women and girls.

Ethiopia is determined to rebuild the region by addressing the humanitarian needs of the people, restoring infrastructure and services, and, most importantly, deterring conflict-related sexual violence from further taking place and providing the necessary support to victims. We call on the international community to rally behind the Government in its effort to respond to the ever-rising humanitarian needs throughout the country by scaling up wide-ranging assistance to meet the needs of the affected population.

Finally, I would like to conclude by reiterating our commitment to the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensuring accountability for those who are found to have been involved in committing such egregious acts. While further affirming Ethiopia's unwavering commitment to addressing the root cause of sexual violence, we call on the Council to play a constructive role within its mandate by assisting countries in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and supporting national mechanisms to effectively enable States to safeguard the well-being of their citizens.

Annex 37

Statement by the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, in its capacity as observer

This statement is delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

We thank Viet Nam for keeping this important topic on the agenda of the Security Council. We owe that to all victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence who expect us to move urgently from commitments to action.

Exactly one year ago, the Secretary-General called for a cessation of violence both on battlefields and in homes. Despite efforts, his latest report (S/2021/312) shows that sexual and gender-based violence has spiked globally during the coronavirus disease crisis and that conflict-related sexual violence remains a cruel and rampant tactic of war, torture, terror and political repression. The pandemic has further exacerbated vulnerabilities, made access to essential services even more challenging for survivors and increased the challenges and risks, particularly for women health workers.

We are deeply concerned about the impact on women and girls of recent events, including the use of sexual violence in the Tigray region in Ethiopia, as described in the Secretary-General's report, and the persisting threat and occurrence of sexual violence in conflict in many countries, as also highlighted in the report. We call on the international community to do more, and better, to prevent such crimes and human rights violations, stop impunity and support the survivors and their families, including children born out of rape. The EU also stresses the need for a survivor-centred approach, where survivors are at the centre of shaping policy and response. In that regard, we support the Secretary-General's call for the establishment of survivor-centred transitional justice mechanisms in post-conflict settings and ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in their design and implementation.

Reprisals, including in the form of intimidation, harassment and violence, online and offline, continue to be perpetrated against civil society actors, activists, women peacebuilders, women human rights defenders and women journalists. For example, the Secretary-General notes the specific targeting of women activists in Yemen, Afghanistan and Colombia. Those actors are at the front line to support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and often take great risks to report on the reality of such issues. We join Special Representative Pramila Patten in calling for enhanced protection of those actors, as well as accountability for all forms of reprisals perpetrated against them.

To succeed in eliminating conflict-related sexual violence, we must work together with all partners. That is a priority for the EU. The EU-United Nations Spotlight Initiative is the largest global effort to eliminate violence against women and girls and has already played a pivotal role in supporting survivors of sexual violence and in transforming social norms to prevent and address that issue.

In New York, the EU, alongside Argentina, Morocco, Mongolia, Namibia, New Zealand and Turkey, established the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls in December 2020. The Group aims to coordinate efforts at the United Nations to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence in all settings. The Group has been joined by nearly 100 States, highlighting the strong international commitment to tackling the issue together.

Furthermore, the Generation Equality Forum is key to mobilizing partnerships and resources to prevent and address sexual violence in conflict and its recommendations will provide a blueprint to step up our actions in that regard. The EU is honoured to take part in that engagement by co-leading the Action Coalition on Gender-based Violence, and we encourage all stakeholders to participate in that process.

Substantial EU support has been provided to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to carry out related programmes, as well as for the invaluable work of Dr. Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad.

Going forward, greater efforts should be made to ensure that all State and non-State parties to a conflict comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. In that respect, the EU has included international humanitarian law in the training curricula for local security forces in EU civilian and military training and capacity-building missions.

The European Union firmly supports zero tolerance and full accountability through the criminal justice systems worldwide, in particular the International Criminal Court as an important instrument of the international community to ensure that such heinous crimes and human rights violations are thoroughly investigated. Perpetrators have to be brought to justice and victims have to receive access to health, justice and reparations. We note with concern the persistent impunity for conflict-related sexual violence, including in situations such as Syria and Myanmar. That responsibility lies with us, the States Members of the United Nations. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that robust legal and institutional arrangements are in place to address sexual violence in armed conflict and that steps are taken to investigate and prosecute perpetrators. In that regard, we urge the Security Council to systematically and explicitly incorporate and apply sexual violence as a designation criterion in United Nations sanctions regimes where such crimes are persistently perpetrated. We remind Member States that in some cases sexual violence in conflicts can constitute a crime against humanity. We call on all countries to support international mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, and to align their national criminal legislations with international criminal law.

The European Union remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences, as well as to sexual and reproductive health and rights in that context. With that in mind, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on, matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, in line with the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024, and to promoting the provision of survivor-centred medical, psychosocial, legal and safety support to all victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

Achieving gender equality is critical to addressing conflict-related sexual violence in the long term. The United Nations can continue to rely on the engagement

and support of the European Union to accelerate action on gender equality and the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda to ensure that women and girls are free and safe to enjoy all their human rights and deploy their full potential.

Annex 38

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations

Germany aligns itself with the statements submitted by Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (annex 28), and by the United Nations LGBTI Core Group (annex 70).

Twenty years after the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has exposed, and even exacerbated, the shocking degree of gender inequality around the globe, one of the root causes and a major driver of sexual and gender-based violence in times of conflict, as well as in times of peace. Survivors of sexual and gender-based violence already had difficulty trying to access health care and justice systems before the pandemic. Now it has often become impossible. Lockdowns, curfews, quarantines, the fear of contracting or transmitting the virus and limited access to first responders compounded existing structural, institutional and sociocultural barriers to filing police reports or seeking sexual and reproductive health care.

Resolution 2467 (2019) put the survivors of sexual violence at the centre of all considerations for the first time. Their rights, health, well-being, empowerment and survival need to guide all our actions in preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. The work of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege at his Panzi hospital in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an inspiring example of that survivor-centred approach. Germany is proud to cooperate with the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation with a view to strengthening survivors' access to reparations and other forms of redress. That is also why we are directly supporting the Panzi hospital with medical staff.

Survivors have told us repeatedly that accountability is crucial to empowering them to deal with their trauma, rebuild their lives, become a true survivor and perhaps even help others who have been through a similar experience. It is simply not acceptable that crimes of sexual and gender-based violence can still be committed without any consequence; commanders fail to discipline their troops; rape is still being used as a tactical means of warfare; terrorists sell women, girls and boys as sex slaves to raise money for their criminal activities; and detainees continue to be raped in prisons. For all those crimes, each and every perpetrator needs to be held accountable, regardless of who or where they are.

Last year, a man accused of being a member of the so-called Islamic State went on trial in Frankfurt. He is indicted on charges of genocide, human trafficking of a Yazidi woman and her daughter and torturing and causing the death of the five-year-old girl. This is the first trial that has raised the charge of genocide in relation to the Yazidis. The German Prosecutor-General brought charges based on the principle of universal jurisdiction. That sends a clear message: no perpetrator will be safe from investigations anywhere, anytime.

We are deeply committed to supporting the fight against sexual and gender-based violence in conflicts worldwide, and to helping accountability take root even in the most fragile contexts. Germany is one of the main supporters of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. In South Sudan, Germany has been a key partner to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in setting up the Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience trust fund, having provided €13 million to date. Empowering women and young people is a key objective of the fund, including through support services for survivors of sexual and

gender-based violence. UNMISS also plays a key role in providing support to mobile courts bringing perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence to justice.

Accountability goes beyond the individual perpetrator. Leaders who condone or order sexual violence as a tactic of warfare or terrorism also need to face consequences. Germany concurs with the assessment of the latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312) that delivering effective responses, based on reliable reporting, to that historically “hidden” crime requires dedicated human and financial resources equal to the scale of the challenge. The deployment of women protection advisers responsible for monitoring, analysing and reporting on conflict-related sexual violence in the field ensures the continued availability of information. For that reason, as co-penholder on the mandate authorization for the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan in 2020, Germany successfully advocated for the deployment of women protection advisers.

Since resolution 2467 (2019) was adopted, there have been two listings that include accounts of sexual and gender-based violence. However, so far, there have been no listings in any sanctions committee solely for the crime of sexual violence. When we have all the information that we need, why do we fail to act more often?

At the same time, we need to acknowledge that sexual and gender-based violence was a scourge long before the outbreak of COVID-19. The underlying cause is an imbalance of power and control, which stems from inequality between men and women, discriminatory attitudes and beliefs, gender stereotypes and social norms that tolerate and perpetuate violence and abuse. If we want to eradicate inequality and discrimination, we need to develop longer-term strategic approaches that tackle those underlying causes.

Without education, women’s participation in decision-making, conflict prevention and peacebuilding are severely diminished. One way to ensure that more women and girls are safe at school is by more States joining the Safe Schools Declaration, which is an important tool for ensuring safe education and preventing conflict-related sexual violence. To date, 107 countries have joined the Safe Schools Declaration, which represents more than half of all States Members of the United Nations, including two thirds of the current Security Council members. While that is encouraging, it is not yet enough.

It is only once gender equality becomes a reality, women’s human rights are guaranteed, those violating such rights face the consequences of their actions and those fighting for such rights are protected that we will finally win the battle against conflict-related sexual violence.

Annex 39**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations**

Greece wishes to thank Viet Nam for convening, in its capacity as the current President of the Security Council, today's open debate on sexual violence in conflict. While fully aligning with the statement submitted by the European Union (annex 37), Greece would like to share some additional remarks.

The Secretary-General, in his latest report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312), clearly illustrates the devastating impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on gender-based social inequalities, which constitute root causes and drivers of sexual violence whether committed in times of conflict or peace. Undoubtedly, conflict-related sexual violence constitutes a blatant and unacceptable violation of the rights of victims, as well as a threat to peace and security, since it may result in further violence and impunity when left unaddressed. In that vein, COVID-19, as a threat multiplier, has not only exacerbated conflict-related sexual violence, but also impeded the unhindered access of survivors to health, justice and reparations systems due to the imposition of the measures taken in response thereto.

Against that backdrop, global action to address conflict-related sexual violence should be coherent, gender-responsive and focused on the survivors in their full diversity. This entails the protection of all their human rights, including sexual and reproductive ones, according to their actual needs, on the basis of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, refugee status, et cetera. In that regard, their relief and recovery, as well as zero tolerance and full accountability for the perpetrators, are deemed essential. At the same time, a survivor-centred approach should address the multidimensional threats to human security, including but not limited to personal, health, economic and environmental security, through context-specific, prevention-oriented, people-centred and gender-responsive solutions.

Prevention of and protection as well as relief and recovery from conflict-related sexual violence contribute to the empowerment of survivors as agents of peaceful change. Accordingly, gender-equal representation, participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels not only lead to gender-responsive policies but also contribute to long-lasting, sustainable peace. In that vein, local ownership entails investing in women's collective power, that is to say, giving voice to and engaging meaningfully with women's organizations, women human rights defenders and women working at the grass-roots level.

Greece is a staunch supporter of the global action to end gender-based and sexual violence once and for all, whether it is committed in times of conflict or of peace. To that end, Greece prioritizes preventing and combating gender-based and sexual violence through the implementation of its national action plans on gender equality as well as on women and peace and security, which is expected to be adopted shortly. In November 2020 Greece published its first annual report on violence against women, which focuses on national actions taken to respond to gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Greece remains committed to enhancing international cooperation with like-minded partners in order to end gender-based and sexual violence in all its forms, protect and empower survivors and bring perpetrators to justice.

As a final note, Greece firmly believes that ending conflict-related sexual violence entails coherent global action in order to turn commitments into tangible results and leave no one behind, through transformative, gender-inclusive and gender-responsive intersectional policies. Only in that way can we achieve the development of gender-equal, secure and sustainable societies.

Annex 40

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations

[Original: English and Spanish]

Guatemala expresses its appreciation to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, in its capacity as President of the Security Council during the month of April, for having convened this open debate on sexual violence in conflict. It expresses further appreciation to the briefers for their presentations.

Today's discussion must address the current challenges faced by women in conflict situations. The risk of regression in the hard-won progress made to date and the additional burden caused by the coronavirus disease COVID-19 pandemic are reflected in the spike registered in gender-based violence worldwide. Joint efforts and sustainable solutions must be put forward to address effectively the remaining challenges in the protection of women and girls and the achievement of true gender equality and peace.

Guatemala attaches the utmost importance to this issue. Sexual violence as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism is a flagrant violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. Measures must be taken in order to stop sexual harassment, slavery, trafficking in persons and other forms of violence. We strongly condemn all those acts and call for their complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict. Due consideration must be given to the early warning signs of sexual violence and the monitoring of global crises, especially in relation to rising violent extremism, terrorism, gender-based hate speech and widespread insecurity.

Guatemala takes note of the Secretary-General's latest report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312). We reiterate the importance of the full and meaningful participation of women and girls, in particular sexual violence survivors, in the decision-making processes that concern them. Socioeconomic reintegration, assistance and treatment with dignity and due consideration for the principles of safety and confidentiality are sine qua non conditions for their protection. The Council must tackle the root causes of conflict-related violence and make the efforts necessary to ensure the prosecution of perpetrators implicated in sexual violence — guaranteeing the ability of law-enforcement and judicial authorities to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate those crimes, including by referring situations to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

We cannot wait to take action; attention to victims remains greatly insufficient. The effects of sexual violence on human rights, public health, peacebuilding and development make our collective response more urgent than ever. Along those lines, as stated in paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report,

“efforts must be made to silence the guns and amplify the voices of women peacebuilders, as well as to invest in public welfare rather than in the instruments of warfare”.

Let us jointly translate commemorations and commitments into real-world results.

In closing, Guatemala firmly believes that women are agents of change and have an important role as facilitators of dialogue and reconciliation in their societies. Through the continued and holistic discussion of this agenda item in the Council, we can further contribute to the interdependence of the pillars of peace and security, development and human rights, and we must strive to build back better after the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Annex 41**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Indonesia to the United Nations, Mohammad Koba**

Let me begin by thanking Viet Nam for having organized this meeting. I also thank today's speakers for their briefings and moving testimonies.

The Security Council must continue to condemn and stand firm against all acts of sexual violence perpetrated against women and children. Despite a decade of concerted focus in the Council to end that crime, the level of compliance by all parties to conflict remains low. The risks of sexual violence are likely to increase, especially during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Against that backdrop, I would like to focus my statement on three fundamental points.

First, I would touch on the importance of ensuring accountability to fight against sexual violence in conflict. The primary responsibility for preventing and combating sexual violence in conflict lies in the hands of national authorities. Governments should also provide maximum protection for the victims, with full respect for their human rights. Therefore, strengthening the reach and capacity of national authorities is vital to facilitating access to justice and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable.

As women play an incredibly significant role in society, we believe that victims of sexual violence must be supported in the process of regaining confidence in themselves. The stigma of being the victims of such heinous crimes often prevents them from coming forward and seeking justice. We particularly commend the efforts of some Governments to put in place a more protective legal and policy frameworks for women and children at risk.

Secondly, it is important to craft a tailor-made reintegration process into society. According to resolution 2467 (2019), we need to treat them as survivors rather than victims. Using that approach, connecting survivors of sexual violence to society through justice and productive avenues can empower them to reintegrate into society. A survivor-centred approach will help national authorities to provide better reintegration programmes that cover legal assistance, psychological support and employment.

Unfortunately, these forms of assistance have been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Such support should therefore be restored as soon as possible.

Thirdly, I would stress the need for the full participation of women in combating such crimes. Indonesia believes that involving more women peacekeepers is an important element of addressing sexual violence in conflict. Women peacekeepers may encourage victims to feel more secure by working with them and thereby help to eliminate crimes of sexual violence. Victims of sexual violence may feel comfortable enough to come forward with their situation if they are helped by women peacekeepers.

Nevertheless, the solution lies in cooperation between both men and women. Therefore, we strongly encourage the troop- and police-contributing countries to continue building the capacities of peacekeepers to enable them to be better equipped to deal with the victims of sexual violence.

Today's debate is about standing up for justice and equity. We stand behind the brave survivors of sexual violence. We stand up for their human rights.

Indonesia attaches great importance to efforts to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence with the full support of a reintegration process for the survivors of such crimes.

Annex 42

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations

Allow me to congratulate the presidency of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam on having convened this important open debate on the issue of sexual violence in conflict, which is of great importance to Iraq. I am confident in the wisdom and able leadership of Viet Nam in leading the Council through the month of April. I would also like to thank Ms. Pramila Patten, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and other briefers for their valuable insights.

The women and peace and security agenda is one of the priorities of the United Nations as a whole. The issue of sexual violence in conflict remains specific and particular to this day. In 2014 the world was faced with new methods of modern slavery and sexual violence in conflict, a tactic of war used by terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), posing a threat to international peace and security. Thus that tactic should be addressed in a comprehensive manner, taking into account the best interests of the victims and national realities.

The Iraqi Cabinet launched the second national plan that mainly focuses on three pillars: first, women's active participation; secondly, the protection of women and girls victims of sexual violence in conflict while ensuring justice and accountability for the perpetrators of such crimes; and, thirdly, prevention.

Iraq is committed to implementing the joint communiqué signed in partnership with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and to that end it included elements of the communiqué in its second national plan to ensure its implementation through the creation of a safe and enabling environment for women and girls and to combat the scourge of violence.

On 1 March 2021, the Iraqi Council of Representatives passed the Yazidi survivors bill, which is comprehensive and inclusive and comprises a series of articles. The bill, which is a milestone in the direction of recovery and rehabilitation, considered the heinous crimes committed by ISIL as genocide and crimes against humanity.

The bill also contains articles on accountability and justice, with no amnesty being granted to those perpetrators who abducted Yazidis and held them captive. The draft bill sets out various reparation measures for survivors of abduction, captivity, sexual slavery and violence. As President Barhim Salih tweeted:

“The vote on the bill is a victory for our daughters who have been subjected to the most heinous violations and crimes of ISIS genocide”.

National laws and legislations allow survivors of all forms of violence, including sexual violence in conflict, to pursue legal action in national courts, as was the case in March 2020, when Ashwaq Haji Hameed, a Yazidi victim and survivor of ISIL atrocities, bravely decided to testify and face her kidnapper and rapist in court. Her bravery continues to empower women and girls survivors of sexual violence and to protect their rights, as well as to assist the Iraqi authorities concerned to hold more members of ISIL accountable on charges of sexual violence.

ISIL members continue to be brought before the law for the atrocities they committed against Iraqis. In that regard, Iraq is committed to achieving accountability for victims of sexual violence in conflict; it cannot tolerate such acts. It would like to note that when sufficient evidence has been gathered, that can further help to hold accountable the perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence.

Iraq believes that by mobilizing public awareness and eradicating negative social norms and the stigma surrounding victims of sexual violence, greater

progress can be achieved. The Iraqi Government, religious leaders and civil-society organizations continue to play a vital role in stressing the importance of supporting survivors of sexual violence, combating stigma and ensuring that the members of ISIL are held accountable for their crimes.

To conclude, Iraq continues to seek further engagement from the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to build the capacity of the respective authorities to ensure the provision of services, livelihood support and reparations for survivors, thus promoting their betterment and their ability to access rehabilitation programmes and psychosocial support.

Annex 43

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations

Italy aligns itself with the statement submitted by the European Union (annex 37) and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

We thank Viet Nam for having organized this open debate, which keeps the topic of sexual violence in conflict high on the agenda of the Security Council.

The protection and promotion of women's and girls' rights and the eradication of the scourge of sexual violence in conflict should be one of the key priorities of the international community, yet year after year the picture remains gloomy, as can be seen in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312). All too often, sexual crimes continue to be used as part of a global strategy of war by States and non-State actors, and States continue to face setbacks when exercising their responsibility to protect their own citizens.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak has exacerbated pre-existing issues, undermining social cohesion and fuelling conflicts, and has not proved to be gender-neutral. On the contrary, the restrictive measures taken to contain the spread of the pandemic have provoked a remarkable rise in sexual and gender-based violence and have further limited women's access to education, legal protection and health services, including sexual and reproductive ones. People living in conflict settings are especially vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic, and it is women and girls who are disproportionately affected, as they face multiple risks and barriers.

Sexual violence represents a major hindrance to women's empowerment: no gender equality can be achieved until we eradicate that scourge. It is key to tackle the root causes of violence, as the prevention of systematic sexual violence begins in times of peace, when national laws should be so robust as to prevent abusive attitudes in wartime. We need a paradigm shift in order to encourage the affirmation of a full culture of gender equality, which promotes women's empowerment and participation in the decision-making process and mainstreams a gendered perspective on society.

Promoting gender equality must go hand in hand with deterring violence. United Nations peacekeeping missions play a crucial role in that regard as they are tasked with protecting civilians. Providing troops with targeted training on gender issues is key to effective deterrence, as is establishing a stronger presence by women among peacekeeping ranks. Women play a fundamental role in enhancing the delivery of mandates, enhancing the protection of civilians as well as the safety and security of peacekeepers and humanitarian actors. They have proved to be extremely successful in accessing communities and creating relationships of trust with local populations, in particular with the most vulnerable categories — women, children and older people — who are often the main victims of violence in conflicts.

At the same time, it is fundamental to assist conflict-torn countries in reforming their judicial systems and strengthening the rule of law and their accountability mechanisms for gross human rights violations and for serious crimes under international law. Fighting against impunity and holding the perpetrators accountable should be a matter of primary concern in order to deter further violations and allow survivors to gain access to justice. Accordingly, we consider that the work of the Security Council should benefit from a more systematic involvement of the International Criminal Court (ICC), with the Office of the ICC Prosecutor receiving the necessary resources to conduct swift investigations. We continue to promote the widest possible implementation of the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe against all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence.

Preventing sexual violence in conflict is a top priority for Italy. Back in 2013, we joined the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, and, in 2017, this issue was at the core of our mandate on the Security Council and of our presidency of the Group of Seven. Last year, together with more than 100 States Members of the United Nations, we supported the Secretary-General's appeal to end gender violence during the pandemic.

Italy is devoting specific attention to fighting all forms of violence against children affected by armed conflicts, with specific attention on girl children, as these violations can have long-lasting impacts on girls' physical and psychological development and undermine their ability to actively shape their futures. In order to raise awareness on this specific issue, at the sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Italy hosted a side event on accountability for violence against girl children in armed conflicts.

Our country spares no effort and resources in providing assistance to victims, as we strongly believe that a survivor-centred approach should provide victims with the services they need to cope with the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence, including medical services, legal assistance and psychological support. This year, we pledged €25,000 in support of the United Nations Conflict-related Sexual Violence Multi-Partner Trust Fund. Furthermore, we are engaged in financing humanitarian projects implemented by local non-governmental organizations, specialized United Nations agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross, aimed specifically at responding to the needs of women and at assisting victims of violence. In particular, Italy recently supported sexual and gender-based violence projects in several conflict and emergency contexts, such as the Syrian crisis, Libya, Palestine, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, including the Tigray region, Mali and Somalia.

In Syria, we have been supporting the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Programme in a joint project aimed at providing sexual and gender-based violence response and prevention services in Al-Raqqa governorate, coupled with livelihood support to the most affected people in the targeted areas. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project had to adapt accordingly, and it currently provides gender-based-violence case management, psychological first aid, individual counselling and psychosocial support remotely.

In the Sudan, with the technical support of UNFPA, we partnered with the local Ministry of Labour and Social Development to establish a gender-based violence helpline for case management, which is a straight-forward mechanism designed to facilitate access to phone-based health, security and legal services, including referrals and telecounselling.

Italy endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and encourages more Member States to do the same in order to ensure safe access to education for women and girls and reduce sexual violence by armed parties at school. We encourage Member States to strengthen the monitoring and reporting of attacks on education, including sexual violence by parties to conflict occurring at or on route to schools, to investigate and prosecute attacks on education, including sexual violence committed against students and teachers, and to hold perpetrators accountable.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Italy's strong commitment to the prevention and tackling of sexual violence in conflicts. We will continue to support the work of the Secretary-General and that of his Special Representative in order to pursue better and increasingly tangible results in this field.

Annex 44**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, Ishikane Kimihiro**

I would like to express my appreciation to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for convening today's important open debate on sexual violence in conflict.

As the Secretary-General sets forth in his report (S/2012/312), sexual violence in conflict is being exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic and is taking a heavy toll on new victims. The human security crisis caused by the pandemic is making the implementation of resolution 2467 (2019) all the more urgent. I would like to explain Japan's efforts to address the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict, focusing on the priorities of resolution 2467 (2019), namely, the need for a survivor-centred approach and the prosecution of perpetrators.

First, on the survivor-centred approach, Japan became a board member of the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in 2020, and it contributed €2 million to ensure that survivors have access to reparations and redress globally. Since 2014, Japan has been contributing to the Trust Fund for Victims, which provides relief to the victims of crimes under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, and it has earmarked most of its contribution for support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Furthermore, through the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, a network of 15 United Nations entities chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict with the mission of preventing conflict-related sexual violence and responding effectively to the needs of survivors, in 2020, Japan contributed to a project aimed at providing mental health, psychosocial and economic support to women victims in Somalia.

Secondly, on the prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence, Japan has, since 2014, provided financial support for the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which operates under the auspices of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Team has been conducting its work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Somalia and Iraq, with the mandate of supporting investigations and prosecutions, legislative reform and capacity-building for judicial and security authorities, in close cooperation with the respective Governments, United Nations missions and country teams. For example, the Team's tireless efforts in the Central African Republic have resulted in 22 cases of conflict-related sexual violence being brought to criminal court in 2019. Japan will continue working with the Team of Experts to hold perpetrators accountable and to bring justice to survivors.

Japan's support for the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict extends beyond the prosecution of perpetrators. For example, a recent contribution to the United Nations Action and the Team of Experts is supporting their work in addressing the needs of children in Iraq born of sexual violence, including the issue of citizenship. As outlined in the Secretary-General's report, this issue can be a hard nut to crack, but we will continue to provide support for the recovery of the dignity of the children and their mothers and their reintegration into their communities.

Translating resolution 2467 (2019) into action is the first step in restoring the dignity of victims, providing them with appropriate protection and offering empowering opportunities to all who are affected. Japan will continue to actively contribute to this end. Furthermore, Japan is committed to continuing to provide

comprehensive support to women in conflict and post-conflict areas globally through the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund and other international partners, with the conviction that the promotion of gender equality and women's economic empowerment are the keys to preventing the occurrence and recurrence of sexual violence.

Annex 45

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations, Amal Mudallali

Allow me first to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and to thank you for organizing this debate on sexual violence in conflict. Allow me as well to thank the respective speakers for their thorough briefings.

Despite all efforts, sexual violence is still a grim reality of today's conflicts. This sombre picture is well-reflected in the latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, where he confirms that in 2020 "sexual violence was employed as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism in settings where overlapping humanitarian and security crises ... continued unabated" (*S/2021/312, para. 12*).

The report reflects as well the striking reality that impunity for sexual violence still reigns, with over 70 per cent of the parties on the list annexed to the report being persistent perpetrators, having appeared on the list for five or more years without taking remedial or corrective action. The report is in line with the victim- and survivor-centred resolution 2467 (2019), in which the Security Council, in paragraph 5, reiterated its grave concern that

"violence, including sexual violence, against women and children in situations of armed conflict ... continue to occur, often with impunity, and in some situations have become systematic and widespread, reaching appalling levels of brutality".

Unfortunately, the coronavirus disease pandemic has added an additional layer of complexity and exacerbated sexual violence in conflicts. The pandemic has amplified and heightened all existing inequalities, including gender-based inequality, which is a driver of sexual violence both in times of conflict and peace.

We need to intensify our efforts to focus on preventing these atrocities, raise awareness of the need to put an end to conflict-related sexual violence, ensure accountability and access to justice and end impunity. We must stand in solidarity with the victims and survivors of sexual violence around the world, respond effectively to their needs, amplify their voices and encourage them to come forward and speak up, especially given that many survivors never report the crime for many reasons, including their fear of stigmatization, rejection or exclusion.

We should give particular attention to sexual violence perpetrated against children. In her 2020 report to the General Assembly, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict reaffirmed that sexual violence against children continue to be perpetrated frequently in the context of other grave violations and that rape and other forms of sexual violence remain significantly underreported, particularly when perpetrated against boys.

When we usually address the issue of sexual violence in conflict, we tend to focus almost exclusively on women and girls. Yet there are many men and boys who are victims of sexual violence in the context of conflicts, and who remain silent due to the extreme shame and stigma surrounding the issue. They too deserve our focus and attention.

We welcome the concerted efforts of the United Nations to address sexual violence in conflict, specially via the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network, through which multiple United Nations entities are working as one with the goal of ending conflict-related sexual violence, as well as the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

and of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We welcome the deployment of women's protection advisers as well in many United Nations peace operations, who provide substantive guidance to United Nations field missions to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence in an integrated manner.

The world watches and learns from the United Nations, which should be setting an example in the fight against sexual violence. In this arena, we welcome the commitment to improve the way the United Nations prevents and addresses sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as the efforts to strengthen the system-wide response and ensure the full implementation of the zero-tolerance policy.

We also recognize the tremendous contributions of civil society and human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, who face multiple challenges while working in conflict and post-conflict situations.

A year ago we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on the women and peace and security agenda, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Unfortunately, despite hard-won gains for women's rights during these 20 years, sexual violence in conflict remains a crucial and urgent issue that requires the attention of the United Nations and the international community. It is high time to end this scourge and to prevent sexual violence from being used as a weapon of war.

In her autobiography, *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity and My Fight Against the Islamic State*, the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Nadia Murad, writes "I want to be the last girl in the world with a story like mine." Let us not fail the victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflicts. Let us live up to their strength and courage. Let us put an end to impunity. And let us do it now.

Annex 46**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Libya to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

My delegation once again commends you on your presidency of the Security Council and thanks you for organizing this open debate on women and peace and security, with a specific focus on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. We welcome the Council's readiness to continue to draw attention to the issue in order to strengthen the political will of the international community to redouble its efforts to address and reduce the incidence of this growing phenomenon.

This debate comes at the right time, as United Nations reports confirm that violence against women is on the rise worldwide. Especially in armed conflict situations, media outlets convey to us harrowing images that elicit grave concern, given the extent to which the rights and dignity of victims are being violated, causing them serious psychological and social harm. Victims are being driven to despair about the possibility that their rights might one day be safeguarded and their hopes and aspirations fulfilled.

Although sexual violence has been perpetrated during armed conflict throughout history, the use of this brutal and abhorrent behaviour as a weapon of war and revenge has become increasingly common in some conflict zones, even persisting in the aftermath of conflict. It is perpetrated with near total impunity. These actions not only constitute a flagrant violation of human rights; they also exacerbate and prolong conflicts and inflict on victims and their families pain and suffering that are difficult to forget, often hampering confidence-building, reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts.

There appears to be an urgent need to promote efforts to act decisively and tangibly to tackle this phenomenon by better understanding the different dimensions of the problem, finding ways to prevent it and addressing its consequences. In that regard, we believe that the following points are important.

First, preventive diplomacy must play a more prominent role in preventing armed conflict and keeping conflicts from degenerating. The Security Council should call for an end to detrimental foreign interference, which often contributes to fuelling conflicts, tearing societies asunder and increasing the incidence of violent and vengeful acts, all of which conspire to create a climate conducive to acts of sexual violence. There is also a clear need to raise a broader awareness of the rules of international humanitarian law, implement resolutions on the protection of women and ratify the relevant international instruments.

Secondly, the best way to protect women from sexual violence is to make them stakeholders and partners in defending their rights. That is why women must take an integral part in social reconciliation, confidence-building and peacemaking processes, and amnesty laws should not make it possible for criminals to escape punishment.

Thirdly, in order to apply the rules of international humanitarian law to the protection of women in armed conflict, there is a need for the implementation mechanisms and mechanisms to monitor progress and assess existing problems and difficulties. For instance, the four Geneva Conventions and their Protocols Additional, which provide for the protection of women in armed conflict, need to translate into tangible action on the ground. Furthermore, it is also crucial to enact new laws that respond to evolving forms of this phenomenon. In addition, it is important to remember that violence against women in armed conflict is an extension of the violence perpetrated against them at various levels in peacetime and of the persistent gender discrimination they suffer.

Fourthly, while following up the review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is an important element of the effort to eradicate sexual violence, there is an urgent need for more interaction between the Council and the General Assembly, which has adopted several important resolutions by consensus, including the resolution containing the 1974 Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (General Assembly resolution 3318 (XXIX)). According to that Declaration, all forms of repression and cruel and inhuman treatment of women and children committed by belligerents in the course of military operations or in occupied territories shall be considered criminal. The Peacebuilding Commission, in accordance with its mandate, also has an important role to play in addressing this phenomenon.

Fifthly, combating impunity is a top priority in the effort to seek reparations and address the suffering of victims and their families, which persists after conflicts have ended. Since this phenomenon is a security problem that requires a security-oriented response, there is a pressing need to build and develop the human and institutional capacities of countries in need, at their requests, so as to enhance their abilities to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of these crimes. In that regard, it must be recognized that if the international community does not address the culture of impunity, more and more women, children and men will fall victim to these crimes as new conflicts erupt.

Sixthly, there is an urgent need to establish a reliable database of cases of sexual violence to inform the adoption of objective policies to address this issue. The relevant United Nations entities and international organizations should not only report cases to civil society institutions and non-governmental organizations; they must also heed the input of the competent national authorities in order to ascertain the magnitude and dimensions of sexual violence and identify effective ways to address it.

Lastly, in spite of the difficulties and challenges Libya faces during this transitional period, my Government remains determined to continue cooperating with the international community to combat and eradicate all forms of violence against women, particularly sexual violence, so that together we can determine how best to fulfil this humanitarian obligation.

Annex 47**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations, Christian Wenaweser**

I thank you, Mr. President, for focusing this debate on conflict-related sexual violence on victim and survivor assistance and access to services, a dimension that all too often remains neglected.

Far too few victims and survivors receive the medical, legal and psychosocial services they so urgently need. Underreporting of sexual violence crimes due to stigma, fear of retaliation and weak rule-of-law institutions compound the situation. At the same time, we can draw on decades of experience, lessons learned and best practices in supporting victims and survivors. The Security Council's women and peace and security resolutions that specifically address conflict-related sexual violence have helped further our understanding and better equip our response in this regard.

In the area of norms-setting, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has played a pioneering role in establishing a comprehensive and victim-centred framework to expansively and efficiently respond to conflict-related sexual violence crimes. For the first time in history, it firmly established conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence as crimes against humanity and war crimes. Gender-based crimes can furthermore constitute acts of genocide. It also requires the ICC Prosecutor to appoint advisers with legal expertise on sexual and gender-based violence. The Court's victims and witnesses unit includes staff with experience in trauma-related to sexual crimes. The Office of the ICC Prosecutor has placed a sharp focus on expertise and commitment to prosecute sexual and gender-based crimes, as evidenced in some of the best-known proceedings before the Court. The trial of Congolese warlord Bosco Ntaganda marked the first time a militia leader was charged with sexual and gender-based crimes. And Lord Resistance Army warlord Dominic Ongwen has also been charged with sexual and gender-based crimes, including sexual slavery.

Moreover, the participation of victims in proceedings of the ICC is a key element of the Rome Statute. The Trust Fund for Victims, created by the Assembly of States Parties in 2004, has provided assistance to many victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. International civil society organizations such as Justice Rapid Response have also done ground-breaking work in ensuring that conflict-related sexual violence crimes are investigated promptly and professionally.

Despite the legal and normative frameworks to prevent and eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence continues to be rampant, including through its systematic use as a tactic of war and attacking civilian populations. The most recent report (S/2021/312) by the Secretary-General documents rape, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls and boys in a large number of conflict situations, many of which are on the Security Council's agenda.

In looking at country situations, we are particularly concerned about the numerous reports of serious forms of sexual and gender-based violence committed in north and central Tigray during military operations since last November. Reports of over 100 relevant violations include cases of individuals forced to rape members of their own families, of women being forced by military elements to have sex in exchange for basic commodities and reports of sexual violence against women and girls in refugee camps. Due to limited access to the affected areas, it is likely that sexual violence crimes have been underreported. We welcome the agreement by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the United Nations

High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct a joint investigation into the human rights violations and abuses by all parties, as a first step in a much-needed accountability process.

Furthermore, we are alarmed by the situation in Myanmar, where a culture of impunity, among the armed forces in particular, including for serious cases of sexual and gender-based violence, has enabled an ongoing systematic attack against the civilian population. In particular, Rohingya women and children in camps for internally displaced persons and those who fled to Bangladesh have remained at significant risk of sexual violence, including forced marriage and forced pregnancy.

We call for full and immediate compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law and unhindered humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas to facilitate the delivery of assistance to survivors of sexual violence. Furthermore, we call for immediate access for United Nations mandate holders, including the Special Envoy and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar.

Harmful gender stereotypes and abusive power dynamics are the root cause of sexual and gender-based violence, which affects women and girls disproportionately, but the same stereotypes also harm men and boys and LGBTI+ people and often result in underreporting, as has also been documented by the Liechtenstein-based human rights organization All Survivors Project. Resolution 2467 (2019) and its comprehensive survivor-centred approach is an important step forward for the women and peace and security agenda.

In times of quarantines, lockdowns and other restrictions on movement caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, it is particularly important to ensure that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have access to reporting mechanisms and necessary services. We call on the Council to include conflict-related sexual violence as a designation criterion in targeted sanctions regimes as well as to fully implement resolution 2467 (2019).

Annex 48**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Luxembourg to the United Nations**

[Original: French]

Luxembourg thanks the Vietnamese presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's open debate on sexual violence in conflict, as well as all the briefers, who enriched the debate with their experience and expertise.

Luxembourg endorses the statement made on behalf of the European Union (annex 37) and those made on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace (annex 28) and Security and the United Nations LGBTI Core Group (annex 70).

While the health crisis related to the coronavirus disease has led to a shift in political and media attention, sexual violence in times of conflict persists. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/312) points out, the pandemic context has contributed to exacerbating gender inequalities, which are one of the structural root causes of sexual violence in conflict, and has reinforced the climate of impunity. Once again, it is the most vulnerable populations, especially refugee and displaced women and girls, that have been the first to be affected by the cross effects of conflict and pandemic situations.

In this context, we must step up our efforts aimed at ensuring that the prevention of sexual violence remains a political priority and that the needs of survivors are not forgotten in the response to the pandemic. It is incumbent on all States to continue to allocate sufficient resources to the fight against impunity and to strengthen access to justice and reparations for survivors.

Luxembourg will continue to commit itself politically, as well as in the framework of its development cooperation and humanitarian action, to projects and initiatives aimed at combating sexual and gender-based violence and fighting impunity. In 2020, we allocated over €13.2 million to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. On a bilateral level, Luxembourg has committed to supporting a project to adapt the Panzi Hospital run by Dr. Mukwege in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a commitment of €5 million over a three-year period, until 2024. With the primary objective of providing care for victims of sexual violence, the project aims to adopt a holistic approach based on four pillars, namely, medical care and psychological, socioeconomic and legal follow-up.

The project is scheduled to start in April 2021. Between 2018 and 2021, we also financed the construction of a regional centre for the medical and psychosocial care of women victims of violence, particularly sexual violence, in the Casamance region of Senegal. In 2021, Luxembourg will continue to support the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross aimed at combating sexual violence, in particular through the financing of a research project on the prevention of sexual violence. Luxembourg also continues to support the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Preventing sexual violence in conflict also means addressing the structural causes that underlie it, which include gender inequality in the broadest sense, stereotypes and social norms leading to the stigmatization of victims and survivors, and intersectional discrimination. Through its feminist foreign policy, the Luxembourg Government applies a multidimensional approach to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence and to promoting gender equality and women's human rights, be they political, economic and social rights or sexual and reproductive rights, as well as women's representation and participation at all levels of decision-making. Gender equality is also one of the priority themes that Luxembourg will

promote at the United Nations Human Rights Council throughout its mandate during the 2022-2024 term.

Today more than ever, it is imperative to increase our efforts aimed at putting an end to impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflicts. Luxembourg will continue to be strongly committed to strengthening the international normative framework and mechanisms and to supporting the work of the International Criminal Court. We also call on the Security Council to continue to include sexual violence as a criterion for designation in United Nations sanctions regimes. The Security Council can count on our commitment, just as we count on the Security Council's commitment, to ensuring access to justice and reparations for survivors and to preventing sexual violence.

Annex 49

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, Syed Mohamad Hasrin Aidid

At the outset, I wish to thank the Vietnamese presidency of the Security Council for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security, focusing on the pressing issue of sexual violence in conflict.

As an elected member of the Security Council in 2000, Malaysia supported the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. The resolution clearly underscored the vital importance of cooperation among all the parties concerned in the field of women, peace, and security, including the protection of women and girls in situations of armed conflict. Nearly 21 years have passed since the adoption of this resolution, yet women continue to be the most direct victims and remain disproportionately affected by armed conflict. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has further exacerbated the situation, resulting in intolerable environments and prolonged instability.

In last year's Malaysia-led joint statement in support of the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire amid the COVID-19 pandemic, 172 entities — States Members of the United Nations, a non-member observer State, and a regional organization with United Nations observer status — expressed deep concern for the continuation of hostilities in various parts of the world, particularly during a global health crisis, in the light of the devastating impact of hostilities on the most vulnerable, especially women and children. The signatories also recognized the crucial role of women in efforts aimed at building sustainable peace.

The effects of armed conflicts on women are numerous and destructive. Malaysia condemns all violence against women, including sexual violence, and urges all parties to conflicts to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. As a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, we call for accountability for crimes of sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls during armed conflict. We reiterate that accountability constitutes not only careful investigations and prosecutions of those responsible but also a broader determination of the political, legal and moral responsibilities of individuals and institutions with regard to past violations. Perpetrators of such crimes must never go unpunished.

Malaysia also strongly condemns all forms of sexual violence against women and girls, including opportunistic attacks and the deliberate use of rape as a weapon.

Malaysia believes that peacekeeping missions and peace operations must be adequately supported so as to enable them to respond to and prevent sexual violence in conflict, including through standardized predeployment and in-mission training. Before they are deployed, Malaysian peacekeepers are trained on how to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. In furtherance of the women and peace and security agenda, our women peacekeepers also served in peacekeeping operations.

While we continue to work towards protecting women against violence in armed conflicts, we must also spare no effort to promote their participation in peace negotiations, humanitarian planning and post-conflict peacebuilding. In that context, Malaysia calls for greater efforts and initiatives by Member States, United Nations entities, including UN-Women, civil society organizations and other relevant actors in order to advance women's rights and protect them from sexual and gender-based violence. In that connection, Malaysia continues to support UN-Women through an ongoing financial contribution so that it can continue to support women's meaningful participation and the integration of gender perspectives in peace and security processes.

At the regional level, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is committed to continue advancing the women and peace and security agenda in the region. In 2017, the adoption of the Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN at the thirty-first ASEAN Summit represented a landmark in the region's commitment to address the pivotal roles that women play in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and recovery. This first ASEAN statement on women and peace and security was subsequently reaffirmed by a joint communiqué of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in 2019. The ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Strengthening Women's role for Sustainable Peace and Security, held in September 2020, also reiterated our determination to enhance the role of women in peace processes, conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, and to expand networks of women in peace and security. ASEAN is also presently developing its regional plan of action on women, peace and security for the period 2021-2022.

In conclusion, Malaysia reaffirms its strong commitment to efforts to address sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. We will continue to work with others to advance that agenda and ensure the full mainstreaming of women in all areas of peace and security.

Annex 50**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, Vanessa Frazier**

Malta thanks Viet Nam for holding this open debate on this important subject and aligns itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (annex 37). We also thank Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the other briefers for sharing their insights and experiences.

One year ago, the Secretary-General called for a cessation of violence, both on battlefields and in homes. Despite all efforts made, his latest report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312) shows that conflict-related sexual violence remains a cruel and rampant tactic of war, torture, terror and political repression. We echo the Secretary-General's call for a complete cessation, with immediate effect, of all acts of sexual violence by all parties to armed conflict.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has also exacerbated an already difficult situation, thus deepening existing gender inequalities and further excluding women from peace and security decision-making. As outlined in the Secretary-General's report, some armed groups have taken advantage of the pandemic to intensify their operations of sexual harassment, slavery, trafficking and terrorism.

As highlighted in resolution 1325 (2000), women and girls disproportionately suffer the impacts of armed conflicts and are usually the main targets of rape and other forms of sexual violence. Their exposure to violence affects their physical, mental and material well-being. It is important to recognize that sexual violence manifests itself in many forms, such as intimidation, harassment and violence — online and offline — and is perpetrated against civil society actors, activists, women peacebuilders, women human rights defenders and women journalists.

Malta remains committed — both at home and within international forums — to addressing conflict and conflict-related gender-based violence, including through awareness campaigns on the issues of sexual violation, sexual and reproductive health, female genital mutilation and human trafficking, as well as through adequate training for personnel dealing with such issues.

One of the main pillars of Malta's national action plan on women and peace and security is the prevention of all forms of violence, including gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. Gender-based violence is a direct result of, and contributes to, systematic discrimination and inequality, and cannot be addressed without prioritizing women's participation in identifying trends and envisioning solutions at all levels. Through its national action plan, Malta seeks to implement a survivor-centred approach that ensures that the particular needs of women and girl victims from conflict-affected areas are taken into account when they are provided services, including treatment and counselling, to support their recovery from trauma.

The prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence must be holistic and must incorporate an educational dimension. It must be human-rights-based, survivor-centred, victim-informed, inclusive, non-discriminatory and designed, implemented and monitored in partnership with survivors and victims. Let us continue empowering survivors and help them on their path to healing.

Another crucial aspect is accountability. There can be no excuse for the use of gender-based violence. Its perpetrators must be identified, brought to justice and held accountable. The prosecution of gender-based violence is most effective with strengthened national legal frameworks and judicial processes.

Addressing gender-based violence is part and parcel of the women and peace and security agenda. Women peacebuilders, civil society leaders, women journalists, politicians and human rights defenders play critical roles in advancing peace and security and are often targeted or at a higher risk of violence. They must be allowed to carry out their work in an enabling environment, which means fully protecting their rights, ensuring accountability for perpetrators and providing urgent support to women who face threats or reprisals.

Women organizations also play a key role in the prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence, including in humanitarian settings, often filling gaps in State-provided services. As such, they should be allowed to operate freely and must be provided all technical and financial support they require.

In order to succeed in eliminating conflict-related sexual violence, we must work together at the national, regional and international levels. Only through a strong international commitment can the international community eliminate violence against women and girls once and for all.

Annex 51

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations

[Original: French]

At the outset, my delegation would like to thank Viet Nam, President of the Security Council for the month of April, for having organized this open debate on the issue of the elimination of sexual violence in times of conflict, the importance of which — given its urgency, its acuteness and its impact on societies — no longer needs to be demonstrated.

My delegation also thanks Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mr. Denis Mukwege, winner of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, and the civil society representatives for the relevance of their respective contributions and the testimonies and information provided.

We condemn all violence. However, sexual violence in times of conflict is even more deplorable. Neither women and girls nor men and boys are spared. The former suffer the most from the devastating consequences of conflict and pay a heavy price because of their great vulnerability. The latter are often subjected to forced labour, slavery, organ theft and sexual exploitation, or are used as human shields, recruited as child soldiers by armed groups or forced to commit suicide attacks.

Sexual violence does not only affect the victims; it eats away at communities and societies as a whole. Its aims are to wound the body, mutilate dignity, destroy the social fabric and squash efforts to rebuild. It destabilizes, ruins and terrorizes societies affected by conflict.

Resolution 1325 (2000) and the nine subsequent resolutions on this issue complement existing international instruments and constitute a normative continuum with a solid and binding legal arsenal developed to ensure the protection of women and girls in situations of conflict and humanitarian crises.

Paradoxically, in recent years, we have seen a dramatic increase in sexual violence in times of conflict. The recurrence of these crimes is becoming a source of great concern to the international community. Worse still, the implementation of the existing legal arsenal is negligible in relation to the scale and gravity of the phenomenon.

Indeed, due to their participation in the most recent armed conflicts and their involvement in mass atrocities and civilian massacres, armed groups undoubtedly represent a major challenge. Da'esh, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and many other non-State armed groups use sexual violence as a tactic of war, a weapon of terror and a source of revenue to fuel their resources and consolidate their power. They openly advocate these barbaric, criminal and intolerable practices as part of their notorious strategic ideological objectives.

Furthermore, the latest report of the Secretary-General, dated 30 March 2021, stresses that “[t]he pandemic amplified gender-based inequality, which is a root cause and driver of sexual violence in times of conflict and peace”, causing “a global spike in gender-based violence at a time when avenues for seeking redress were narrower than ever, as shelters closed and clinics were repurposed in response to COVID-19” (*S/2021/312, para. 2*). This shadow pandemic is further exacerbated when it goes unreported or underreported.

The Kingdom of Morocco, a member of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the Group of Friends for Gender Parity, fully subscribes to

its international commitments to combat all forms of sexual violence, including in times of conflict, which they consider to be barbaric, brutal and inhumane methods and practices with grave consequences for the ability to achieve lasting peace and reconciliation.

Because of the systematic and premeditated nature of acts of sexual violence, the Kingdom of Morocco believes that it is urgent to seek innovative approaches to combat this scourge. In that regard, it is necessary to adopt and implement a comprehensive and inclusive approach that takes into account the complexity of the root causes of sexual violence; restores the dignity of the victims; addresses the stigma surrounding the victims, including children born of such violence; introduces firm accountability measures against perpetrators who violate international humanitarian law, human rights and the Geneva Conventions; and invests in rebuilding sustainable peace. Prevention remains essential to eradicating sexual violence.

Religious leaders have a powerful and persuasive role to play in combating the use of religion to justify sexual violence. They should be encouraged to speak out strongly against it. Cooperation with local actors and community leaders is also crucial, as they can identify the warning signs of sexual violence and propose appropriate prevention strategies.

In conclusion, protection, prevention and the fight against impunity must be the watchwords. That is our responsibility and our duty. International law and, in particular, international humanitarian law, must be applied without exception. It is our responsibility to protect and respond to the needs of victims, to prevent sexual violence and to ensure that perpetrators are held fully accountable for their actions. It is high time to invest in peace, to restore the dignity of victims and to make the project of rebuilding societies and sustaining peace a reality.

Morocco welcomes the efforts of the United Nations to eliminate sexual violence in conflict, in particular through the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network, and the work of Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Morocco also welcomes the initiatives taken in the context of peacekeeping operations to combat sexual violence, as well as the appointment of advisers to combat sexual violence and the adoption of codes of conduct, military action plans and zero-tolerance policies within the armed forces.

Annex 52**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations, Kyaw Moe Tun**

My delegation wishes to congratulate you again on your able leadership of the Security Council.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2021/312), and I wish to express my appreciation to Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mr. Denis Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and Ms. Caroline Atim, Director of the South Sudan Women with Disabilities Network.

We have witnessed significant progress in the promotion of the women and peace and security agenda since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). The meaningful participation and representation of women in conflict resolution and prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as the protection of women and girls in armed conflicts, has never been more relevant.

We applaud the great efforts made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and United Nations peacekeeping missions to prevent sexual violence in conflict and address the needs of survivors.

The elected National League for Democracy-led civilian Government has put gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of national development strategies. Myanmar upholds the zero-tolerance policy for any form of sexual violence. Accordingly, we have enacted legal reforms for the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls. In this light, the draft law on the prevention and protection of violence against women was drafted during the civilian Government. This new draft law will reinforce the protection of women from all forms of violence, including domestic and sexual violence. Furthermore, it will offer an opportunity for Myanmar to effectively combat violence against women at both international and domestic levels.

To demonstrate its commitment to addressing conflict-related sexual violence, the Government of Myanmar signed a joint communiqué with the United Nations on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in December 2018. The National Committee on Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence was also established to implement the joint communiqué in March 2019.

The Committee developed an action plan, with technical assistance from the United Nations, to identify prioritized implementation areas, such as the issuance of clear directives by the military, the investigation of alleged violations and the prosecution of perpetrators, the capacity-building of law enforcement officers, legal reform measures and the strengthening of service delivery for survivors.

One-stop women support centres and 24-hour help lines have been set up to provide women and girls with physical, legal, psychological and social support. These centres and help lines are operating 24 hours a day seven days a week during the coronavirus disease pandemic to provide timely services to women and girls as they are more vulnerable during lockdowns.

Victims of sexual violence are also provided with one-time financial support for rehabilitation. New standard operation procedures were developed in 2019 to assist with case management for gender-based violence.

Moreover, the Child Rights Law, adopted in Myanmar in July 2019, criminalizes sexual violence, requiring the Government, the military (Tatmadaw) and armed groups to take necessary measures to protect children from sexual violence.

The National League for Democracy-led civilian Government is fully committed to enhancing human rights for all its citizens, especially the most vulnerable groups, including women and girls. Despite all the challenges it faces, the Government's protection of women and girls in conflict-related sexual violence has gained momentum.

Furthermore, the efforts and hard work that the civilian Government has undertaken regarding human rights in Myanmar, including the protection of women and girls in conflict-related sexual violence for the period of 2016 to 2020, have been included in the national report submitted to the third cycle of the universal periodic review. That report was successfully reviewed during the thirty-sixth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in January.

However, since the military coup on 1 February, the brutal and inhumane acts, arbitrary arrests and torture of civilians of Myanmar by the military group have become systematic and target individuals and innocent civilians. It is evident that such actions by the military group violate fundamental freedoms, as well as international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and constitute crimes against humanity.

To be able to continue to engage and work constructively with relevant United Nations agencies to achieve our common goals of promoting and protecting human rights, as well as advancing the women and peace and security agenda, action to put an end to the military regime must be taken by all means without delay. Therefore, I wish to stress that the United Nations and the international community have the responsibility to use all necessary means to protect the people of Myanmar, including women, girls and children, from the atrocities and brutal and inhumane acts committed by the military.

Annex 53

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations, Amrit Bahadur Rai

I would like to begin by thanking the presidency of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for convening today's open debate on sexual violence in conflict. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312). I thank the briefers for their updates and valuable insights.

Nepal strongly condemns the use of sexual violence as a weapon and tactic of war. Perpetrators of such violence must be held accountable.

We believe that ending sexual violence is pivotal to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Nepal supports the normative framework of the Security Council towards ending sexual violence in conflict.

The predicament of victims and survivors of sexual violence has further worsened owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic. This calls for more gender-sensitive strategies to help the victims and their families.

Nepal stresses the importance of the effective implementation of existing instruments for the prevention of sexual violence, the protection of victims and ensuring criminal accountability. As stipulated in resolution 2467 (2019), we need to take a holistic, survivor-centred approach to provide justice to the victims and help them rebuild their lives.

Sexual violence in conflict must be addressed in all its dimensions, as it is intricately linked with trafficking in persons, migration, labour exploitation, vulnerability to recruitment and radicalization by armed groups. We must redouble our efforts to prevent such violence by advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in political, social and economic sectors.

The Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence rightly depicts how sexual violence has continued to be employed as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism, and as a tool of dehumanization in conflict settings. The report also highlights how survivors and their children continue to be traumatized with a multitude of challenges related to their health, well-being, justice and social dignity.

However, we regret that the report includes inaccurate references on criminal accountability for conflict-era cases in Nepal. The report argues that there was "widespread perpetration of sexual violence during the conflict" (*S/2021/312, para. 64*) in Nepal. This is a misleading statement and is devoid of facts and evidence, as there is only one registered case of conflict-era-related sexual assault in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Nepal.

The report also fails to acknowledge the mechanism established by the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, 2014, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Rules, 2016, to ensure the confidentiality of the victims, complainants and witnesses. The Truth and Reconciliation Act and Rules also guarantee the security and protection of mental and physical welfare and the privacy and dignity of the victims, complainants, witnesses and persons assisting in investigations of sexual violence.

We wish to see a more credible report of the Secretary-General based on facts and reflecting the progress made by Nepal towards ensuring justice for the conflict victims.

Conscious of the correlation between women's empowerment and gender equality and peace and security, Nepal has been a proactive supporter and promoter of the women and peace and security agenda.

As the first country in South Asia and the second in Asia, Nepal introduced in 2011 a national action plan to implement resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The plan incorporated an inclusive and participatory approach with the participation of conflict victims and civil society organizations.

The national action plan was successful in enhancing the participation of women in decision-making, protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence and ending impunity. Several laws and policies were revised in favour of the protection of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Strong laws have been put in place for holding perpetrators accountable.

Building on the success of the first national action plan, the draft of the second national action plan on women and peace and security has been prepared with a focus on the concerns of survivors, female ex-combatants and child victims. The draft ensures a holistic, comprehensive and transformative transitional justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.

Nepal attaches high importance to the equitable and meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding. We believe that an enhanced level of participation of women in United Nations peacekeeping missions makes peace operations more efficient and effective.

As one of the largest troop- and police-contributing countries, Nepal is committed to increasing the number of women peacekeepers. We have also embraced inclusive policies encouraging more females to join the national security forces.

Nepal is committed to a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and is making efforts to attain the goal of a zero-case scenario.

In conclusion, access to justice is a must for victims, survivors and witnesses of sexual violence. Our efforts should focus on the reintegration of survivors into society with dignity and honour. As a country with experience of a unique and homegrown peace process, Nepal stresses the importance of the constructive engagement of women in conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict restructuring and rebuilding.

Annex 54

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations

We would like to thank Viet Nam for organizing today's debate and keeping this important matter on the agenda of the Security Council.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement by the European Union (annex 37), the statement by the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (annex 28) and the LGBTI Core Group statement (annex 70).

Over the past year, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has revealed that the hard-won progress on combating and preventing sexual violence in conflict is fragile. The pandemic exacerbates sexual violence, hampers the collection of timely data and impedes access to services for survivors. These developments affirm that the current pandemic is a gendered crisis. The Kingdom of the Netherlands therefore fully agrees with the Secretary-General that no effective response can be gender neutral. The needs of survivors of sexual violence cannot be put on pause and neither can our response to such violence.

Allow me to highlight three areas of action to strengthen the prevention of and responses to sexual violence in conflict.

First, a survivor-centred approach is important. The needs of survivors must be put front and centre in our actions. Adopted in 2019, resolution 2467 (2019) recognized the need for a survivor-centred approach to sexual violence in conflict. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic shows us that when we enter a worldwide crisis, survivors of sexual violence are not a priority. We know that sexual and gender-based violence threatens peace, security and stability worldwide, but we are not doing enough to meet survivors' needs.

Importantly, survivors of sexual violence in all their diversity must have access to holistic, adequate and comprehensive services in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights, mental health and psychosocial support, protection, legal services, access to justice and support for livelihoods. Concrete and sustained actions must be taken to ensure that diverse survivors can claim their right to such services and to ensure long-term measures to address the impact of sexual violence for survivors and their communities. In this year's report on sexual violence in conflict, the Secretary-General describes service delivery as "the ultimate expression of political will" (*S/2021/312, para. 4*). The Kingdom of the Netherlands could not agree more.

To ensure a survivor-centred approach, the importance of accountability for these crimes cannot be understated. We have to make sure that there is enhanced attention to sexual violence in documentation and evidence-gathering mechanisms and that perpetrators are held accountable.

Secondly, survivors' leadership is imperative. To tackle the root causes of sexual violence in conflict and to build back better in the wake of the pandemic, the Kingdom of the Netherlands underlines the recommendation of the Secretary-General to promote women's leadership in international political, security and rule of law institutions, as well as peace- and decision-making processes. In particular, women survivors of sexual conflict have an important role to play. It must be recognized that survivors are individuals with diverse identities, needs, perspectives and wishes, and they should have a meaningful say in decisions that affect their lives. This enhances peacebuilding and paves the way towards the prevention of sexual violence in the future. We have a joint responsibility to promote survivors'

leadership and to ensure that survivors have a seat at the table and are heard at all levels of decision-making.

One way of doing this is by using the means and institutions available to us. For example, in 2021 and 2022 the Kingdom of the Netherlands is a member of the Peacebuilding Commission. One of our most important goals is to render discussions within the Commission more inclusive by consistently inviting civil society, particularly women and youth, to meaningfully participate, inform and influence discussions.

Thirdly, on strengthening civic space and civil society, survivors of sexual violence in conflict who speak up to about their experiences, as well as women peacebuilders, civil society leaders, politicians and women human rights defenders, are at particular risk of violence. This is unacceptable. Everyone deserves equal protection and should be able to fully enjoy their human rights.

But the international community should go further than protecting these groups, by actively supporting, including through financial means, their meaningful participation in public life and decision-making. In January 2021, the Kingdom of the Netherlands started new women and peace and security programmes, focusing on enhancing protection for sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, promoting women's leadership in peace and security, and countering harmful gender norms. These programmes will run until 2025, with a total budget of €40 million, and are geared to specifically support local women's rights organizations, aiming to strengthen Southern leadership and amplify civil society's voices in a spirit of partnership.

More than a year ago, the Secretary-General made an urgent appeal for a global ceasefire, including the cessation of sexual violence. Over the past year, COVID-19 has posed unparalleled threats to global health, deepened inequalities, damaged economies and shifted political priorities. Violent conflict continues to rage and sexual and gender-based violence has intensified worldwide. Recognizing that prevention is always the best cure, we reiterate the Secretary-General's appeal and call for a redoubling of efforts to prevent and respond to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Annex 55**Statement by the Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Clare Hutchinson**

I thank you for the opportunity to make a statement at this open debate on sexual violence in conflict. I would like to start by recognizing and thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten for her continued leadership and commitment to this agenda.

Since the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), there has been growing public recognition that conflict-related sexual violence is used as a weapon of war against women and girls — and increasingly against men and boys. Sexual violence perpetuates conflict and instability. Its long-term, destructive nature has devastating effects, not only on survivors of this crime, but on entire communities.

As a political and military alliance, NATO recognizes that sexual violence in conflict is not only a gross violation of human rights — it is also a real and persistent security challenge. This violence has consequences that increase the costs and complexities of armed conflict, rendering the prospects for peace and stability far more difficult. Wartime rape fuels displacement, weakens governance and destabilizes communities, thereby inhibiting post-conflict reconciliation and imperilling long-term stability.

Despite the adoption of resolutions, policies and guidelines, not only does the problem of conflict-related sexual violence persist; it is evolving and growing. And, as we have seen, it is increasingly used as a tactic of terrorism. State and non-State armed actors have used and continue to use sexual violence to intimidate, terrorize, displace and destroy. They see this tactic as both potent and profitable.

The core mission of NATO over the past 72 years has been to safeguard freedom and security. Our work on the protection of civilians is key to that mission. Over the years, we have put in place policies, doctrine and capacity-building tools to enhance our ability to better protect populations at risk. We are shaping a human-security approach to our work, including through our policies on the protection of civilians and on combating trafficking in human beings. We have in place military guidelines on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence, and we are in the process of drafting a formal NATO policy to bolster the political foundation on which this vital work stands.

Conflict-related sexual violence continues to pose significant threats to global peace and security. It is a threat to its victims as well as to our core values of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. We have a moral and operational imperative to address it.

We recognize that understanding and responding to the grievous, systematic sexual abuse of women and girls in and around conflict is mission critical and essential to our operational effectiveness. We understand that sexual violence does not have to be an inevitable consequence of conflict. And we understand that we can help to drive change.

The adoption of resolution 2467 (2019) acknowledges that structural gender inequality and discrimination are the root causes of sexual violence, while affirming the necessity for the participation and empowerment of women as the only viable route to sustainable peace and security.

NATO has taken up the women and peace and security agenda and, over the years, our contributions to this work have increased, including in our understanding

of the critical connections between gender equality and sustainable peace. We know that sexual violence does not happen in a vacuum. We recognize that we cannot combat this heinous crime if we do not understand the inequalities that lead to the destruction of women's rights and their bodies.

Only by working closely with affected communities, including women's groups, can we accurately and proactively identify conflict-related sexual violence threats and identify essential early-warning signs in areas of risk. Gender equality and the strengthening of women's empowerment must be at the centre of every protection activity.

There can be no protection without participation.

Developing and maintaining high standards for ourselves is crucial and encouraging high standards in other militaries around the world is also essential. We have worked with many of our partner countries, strengthening our training on human rights and the protection of civilians, including against conflict-related sexual violence. And this is key — ridding the world of this blight will take concerted, cooperative effort among all those committed to peace and security.

We have reaffirmed our international obligations to protecting women, girls, men and boys from sexual violence, and highlighted the need to develop further political and operational guidance on how to respond to such heinous crimes, including in relation to reporting.

The scourge of sexual violence in and around conflict remains a pressing global challenge. Despite the definitions, resolutions, commitments, endorsements and financing dedicated to eradicating sexual violence, such intolerable crimes continue in numerous conflicts around the world today, where the bodies of so many women and men, girls and boys, are co-opted as part of the battlefield. It demoralizes, destabilizes and destroys individuals, communities and societies around the world.

Preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence is not just a moral duty; it is critical to achieving durable peace and security. Actions that NATO has taken have made a real difference. But we all have a responsibility to do even more.

That is why NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg has highlighted the importance of reinforcing our policy framework to strengthen the political foundation for our continued commitment to eliminating sexual violence in conflict. This is an urgent task to create the conditions for security that will allow everyone to live free from abuse and violence.

Ultimately, in tackling sexual violence in conflict, we do more than help individual victims; we set the tone for the respect for fundamental dignities and human rights that is the basis for freedom and essential for peace. By doing this, we can lay a foundation for lasting stability — a foundation that we can all play a part in building.

Annex 56**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations**

Half of the population affected by conflict are women and girls. Women and peace and security is thus an important element in the work of the Security Council.

The delegation of Pakistan commends the efforts made by the Security Council to prevent sexual violence in armed conflict and promote global awareness of this challenge. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was a landmark that established the intrinsic relationship between sexual violence in conflict and the maintenance of international peace and security. Yet, despite these efforts, women and girls continue to be subjected to sexual and gender-based violence in almost every conflict around the world.

We note with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312). It highlights the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to preventing sexual violence in conflict situations and providing rehabilitation services to victims of sexual violence. The pandemic has amplified resource constraints, gender inequalities and the fragility of support systems and rehabilitation services in conflicts around the world.

Sexual violence is an underreported crime. The existing structural, institutional and sociocultural barriers to reporting such gender-based violence have been compounded due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The incidence of sexual violence is endemic in situations of foreign occupation and the systematic denial of the right to self-determination. Such violence is aggravated where conflicts remain unresolved and where they assume a religious or ethnic dimension. We urge the Secretary-General to include dedicated information on the incidence of sexual violence, including the use of rape as an instrument of occupation policy, in territories under foreign occupation in future reports to the Security Council.

The international community should also address gaps in oversight, investigations and accountability mechanisms regarding sexual violence in conflict situations, and the Security Council can continue to play an instrumental role in this regard. The provision of health services, rehabilitation, justice and reintegration mechanisms for survivors of sexual violence should be strengthened.

For the prevention and prohibition of sexual violence in conflict, it is the responsibility of international community, including the mechanisms of the United Nations, to end impunity and promote accountability for sexual violence in conflict. Increased prosecution in cases of rape and gang rape in conflict as war crimes and crimes against humanity would serve as a panacea for preventing rape and sexual violence. In this regard, we would like to urge the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network, the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and United Nations peacekeeping missions to strengthen accountability mechanisms in all conflict settings. We also urge Member States to make robust efforts in implementing all resolutions related to women and peace and security, including resolution 2467 (2019).

Annex 57

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the delegation of Viet Nam for having organized this open debate on sexual violence in armed conflict and for bringing this essential theme to the attention of the Security Council. I would like to extend my gratitude to all the briefers. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his informative and comprehensive report (S/2021/312) on conflict-related sexual violence, which presents in-depth analyses of the most pressing problems and a set of practical and quality recommendations for a wide spectrum of international actors, ranging from the Council and States Members of the United Nations to donors and regional and intergovernmental organizations.

Poland aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union (annex 37) and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (annex 28), both of which reaffirm strong support for zero tolerance for any form of sexual violence.

We share the view that the scale of conflict-related sexual violence against civilians is of paramount concern. The use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as weapons or tactics of war is widespread. The most affected are women and girls, yet we must also account for the presence of male victims.

Survivors of sexual violence perpetrated by armed and/or terrorist groups suffer physical injuries, deep-rooted stigma and various forms of discrimination in their communities, including ostracism by their families and exclusion from the public sphere. This is particularly true for children born of sexual violence, who, merely because of this fact, are often denied nationality, excluded from school, deprived medical treatment and subjected to physical and psychological violence. These children are as much victims of sexual violence as their mothers. We stand in solidarity with all victims and urge greater support and empowerment for those affected by sexual violence in conflict situations.

Conflict-related sexual violence has long been regarded as an unfortunate yet inevitable by-product of war and terror. This has resulted in a growing culture of impunity and a lack of accountability. We need to end this immediately. If we manage to reduce impunity and bring perpetrators to justice, we will be able to send a strong message to victims that their voices have been heard, and to offenders that the days of meaningless warnings are over.

Poland highlights that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in official peace processes, in line with the objectives of resolution 1325 (2000), is a cornerstone of sustainable peace. Unfortunately, female peacebuilders not only face structural barriers limiting their access to national and international decision-making arenas, but they are also targeted for their activism. Women participating in official peace negotiations continue to experience high levels of insecurity and personal threats, including sexual violence being used as a tool of reprisal.

Poland underscores the importance of women's participation in all processes related to ending sexual violence in conflict, including peace talks. Female negotiators can best guarantee a survivor-centred approach, including the rehabilitation of women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, ensuring post-conflict reparations and accountability and establishing vetting mechanisms to exclude perpetrators of sexual violence from security forces.

Last but not least, we must not underestimate the negative impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic, since its grim consequences, especially health and economic consequences, are very likely to increase sexual and gender-based violence

in situations of conflict and fragility. With that being acknowledged, we should support peacekeeping and monitoring missions so that they are capable of providing adequate protection to victims of all forms of violence. In this vein, Poland endorses further deployment of women's protection advisers and broader use of early-warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence.

Eradicating sexual violence in conflict is a must in today's world. This can be achieved only through prevention and firm legal responses within the system of international justice, for accountability is critical to ensuring the desired deterrent effect. Poland stands ready to support all credible initiatives that can bring us closer to this goal.

Annex 58

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations

Portugal would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Viet Nam for organizing this open debate. We further commend the Secretary-General for the publication of his latest report (S/2021/312).

Sexual violence in conflict is a crime perpetrated against women, men, girls and boys. However, women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group, in order to fulfil military, economic or ideological objectives. In this context, it is essential to tackle the root causes that drive and perpetuate this violence, including gender inequality and stereotypes, which are exacerbated by conflict and militarization.

Unlike other forms of lethal or non-lethal violence, conflict-related sexual violence is always carried out intentionally and, from the perpetrator's perspective, has symbolic consequences, since it establishes both the literal and symbolic domination and subordination of the other — directly, the victim, and, symbolically, the community.

In this sense, we would like to recall that sexual violence in conflict is not a mere consequence of war. Victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflict can be subject to discrimination, sexual assault, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, human trafficking and forced marriages. Those crimes are serious violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. Therefore, we must ensure accountability and fight against impunity, while maintaining a zero-tolerance approach. The military defeat of aggressors does not replace their conviction or the recognition of the survivors' suffering.

Since the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) in 2008, the United Nations has been taking appropriate steps to address widespread and systematic sexual violence, including with the adoption of the resolution 2467 (2019), in 2019, which underlined the need to strengthen justice and foster accountability while, at the same time, introducing a survivor-centred approach and rights-based response.

In this regard, Portugal would like to commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, for her work and efforts in strengthening United Nations mechanisms to tackle sexual violence in conflict as a peace and security issue. That mandate was an important accomplishment of resolution 1888 (2009).

Last year, we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security — the first resolution to recognize that ending violence targeting women is crucial for sustainable peace and security. It recognized the impact of armed conflicts on women and highlighted the importance of promoting the active participation of women peacekeepers and of including women of all ages and backgrounds in negotiation, decision-making and policymaking as well as ceasefire processes. The women and peace and security agenda has since become a pillar of peace processes.

Women are fundamental drivers of change. Although women and girls are, unfortunately, the most affected by conflict, they are also relevant actors in the prevention and resolution of conflict.

It is urgent to implement specific strategies against acts of violence against women, in cooperation with civil society, including youth-led and women-led

organizations. New technologies can be very useful in the protection of survivors, allowing for the prevention and reporting of crimes.

On this matter, the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe is a fundamental international instrument providing adequate independent monitoring and recommendations to States parties. The Istanbul Convention is open to all countries. We call on all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention.

This commitment also includes the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights and providing survivors with access to mental health care and legal services.

Regrettably, and despite the Secretary-General's call for global ceasefire one year ago, these commitments have been particularly hindered by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

It is instrumental to improve the training of military and security forces on the ground in preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence.

Portugal has a holistic approach to the women and peace and security agenda based on the promotion of gender equality, the inclusion of women in conflict prevention, the training of armed forces and the fight against gender and sexual violence. We look forward to the outcomes of this open debate, which is an opportunity to strengthen our commitment to fight the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of these dreadful crimes.

Annex 59**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani**

[Original: Arabic]

I would like to congratulate your country on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month, and I thank you for convening this important debate. I also thank the participants for their important briefings and for their efforts to provide support and assistance to victims of sexual violence in conflict.

This meeting is taking place against the backdrop of the challenges faced by women as a result of the global health crisis, in addition to other increasingly complex challenges that are exacerbated by the increase in conflicts. Women and girls pay the highest price.

Qatar believes that it is especially important to prevent sexual violence in conflict, as the issue is closely related to the promotion and protection of human rights — a top Government priority — and to its efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and promote international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Preventing sexual violence in conflict necessitates proactive steps to empower women at every stage, before and after conflict, including by ensuring that they are able to participate fully and actively in political, economic and social life. We stress that the international community must devote greater attention to enabling women to participate in peace processes and negotiations, thereby promoting the desired outcomes and ensuring that those outcomes are sustainable, as borne out by the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It is also necessary to give the particular needs of women and girl victims of sexual violence pride of place in peace agreements.

That is why Qatar takes into account the needs and role of women and girls as target demographic groups in the many international development and relief programmes that it carries out in conflict zones around the world. In that connection, Qatar contributed actively to organizing the first International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes, which was held in Helsinki in 2019. It will also host the High-Level Global Conference on Comprehensive Peace Paths for Youth, to be held in Doha in 2022 in collaboration with Finland, Colombia, the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, and the Education Above All Foundation in Qatar. The Conference will focus on the participation of young women in peace processes. In order to achieve the Conference's stated goal, we, as host country, have taken gender equality into consideration at every stage of our preparations for the Conference so as to ensure implementation and follow-up of its outcomes. We are very hopeful that the active participation of young women in the Conference will help bring forth a new generation that will pave the way for women to participate widely in peace processes and prevent sexual violence in conflict situations.

The involvement of women contributes to the success of conflict resolution through mediation. We are convinced that protecting the rights of women and girls and promoting the advancement of women and their active participation in society should be an essential part of any agreement.

In that connection, as a major sponsor of the Afghan dialogue aimed at achieving peace and stability, my country was determined, in coordination with the parties participating in the dialogue, to involve women in the Afghan peace talks held in Doha in September 2020. A number of women members of the negotiating

team of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan participated in those talks. Similarly, at the July 2019 negotiations in Doha, women participants played an important role and contributed significantly to fostering an environment conducive to fruitful dialogue.

In conclusion, I reiterate that Qatar is committed to continue cooperating with all stakeholders on the women and peace and security agenda at the national, regional and international levels, with a view to providing the support needed to implement that agenda on the ground, with a view to fostering sustainable peace and security worldwide.

Annex 60

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, Cho Hyun

The Republic of Korea aligns itself with the joint statement of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (annex 28) and has the honour to submit this statement in its national capacity.

At the outset, my delegation commends you for convening today's timely open debate and expresses its deep appreciation to the briefers for sharing their valuable insights. We also welcome the most recent report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312) and reiterate our full support for Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

As the Secretary-General's report has rightly points out, "[t]he current pandemic is a gendered crisis" (S/2021/312, *para.* 4). Its disproportionate socioeconomic impacts on women and girls have exacerbated their suffering, casting a grim shadow on the women and peace and security agenda. We are faced with heightened risk of sexual violence and gender inequality, while the voices and needs of survivors are increasingly overlooked or forgotten altogether. Now more than ever, our concerted effort is required to maintain our hard-won gains in this critical sphere.

Against this troubling backdrop, the Republic of Korea would like to highlight the following three points.

First, a survivor-centred approach, as outlined in resolution 2467 (2019), is key to preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. We must ensure that survivors of sexual violence receive non-discriminatory access to all the services they need, such as sexual and reproductive health-care services and mental and psychosocial support.

In accordance with its Action with Women and Peace Initiative, the Republic of Korea proudly hosted the second International Conference last November, with a particular focus on a survivor-centered approach. Also, my Government has been participating in the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence as one of its board members and will continue our contributions to the Fund.

Secondly, we need to elevate our sustained efforts to ensure accountability and end impunity. We are deeply concerned that sexual violence continues to be employed as a tactic of war and terrorism in settings where security and humanitarian crises overlap in many parts of the world. For instance, the Secretary-General's report presents allegations of over 100 rape cases in the Tigray region in Ethiopia, including reports of sexual violence against women and girls in refugee camps. This abhorrent violation of human rights is simply unacceptable. We take note that the Ethiopian Government has reiterated its zero-tolerance policy on sexual violence and look forward to a heightened effort to investigate and hold perpetrators accountable.

Last but not least, gender perspectives must be incorporated in the entire peace continuum. In particular, peacekeeping missions must fully take into account gender mainstreaming across all mission activities at all stages. In that connection, we fully support the role of women protection advisers and monitoring arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence in the field. We also strongly support the important role of gender advisers and gender focal points in peacekeeping operations, highlighting their impact on incorporating gender perspectives throughout the mission activities.

Furthermore, we need to step up our efforts to increase the number of women in peacekeeping operations and to ensure safe, enabling and gender-sensitive

environments. To that end, the Republic of Korea has been making efforts to increase the number of women military observers and staff officers serving in United Nations peace operations to 25 per cent by 2028, in line with the Secretary-General's Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028. The Republic of Korea believes that the upcoming 2021 Peacekeeping Ministerial, which will be held in Seoul this December, will be a great opportunity to discuss further advancing the women and peace and security agenda.

The implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, including preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence, has a very special meaning for the Republic of Korea. We will continue to endeavour to restore the honour and dignity of the so-called comfort women victims and survivors and to turn their painful experience into a historical lesson to prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

In 2014, the Republic of Korea established its first national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We are pleased to announce that the third national action plan, for the period from 2021 to 2023, has recently been established. We will continue to spare no effort to advancing the women and peace and security agenda in all its pillars moving forward.

Annex 61**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations, Michal Mlynár**

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (annex 37).

Allow me to express my gratitude for the organization of this open debate on sexual violence in conflict. As conflicts continue to rage in various parts of the globe, innocent civilians are faced with unbearable suffering. Acts of sexual violence constitute extraordinarily appalling atrocities against civilians, targeted mostly against women and girls. The international community, while addressing the broader issue of attacks against civilians, must focus on the issue of sexual violence in conflict. This timely debate can contribute to that end.

My delegation shares and supports the Secretary-General's view that all approaches to conflict prevention and resolution, as well as recovery efforts, must put at their core women's full, equal and meaningful participation and rights, including respect for bodily autonomy. We stress the importance of a holistic approach, including the need to address conflict-related sexual violence as part of the women and peace and security agenda and not only to encompass prevention and protection from conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence but also to emphasize the importance of the equitable and meaningful participation of women in the achievement of peace and security.

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and the wider effects of conflict-related sexual violence echo across communities and generations. It is the responsibility of all States to support and assist survivors and to hold perpetrators to account. It is unacceptable that perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, from both States and non-State armed groups, should be allowed to continue to live in impunity. Full accountability for such crimes is one important factor in bringing justice to victims. Slovakia supports zero tolerance on all accounts.

In that regard, my delegation commends the leadership of the Secretary-General, as well as his commitment to this important agenda. We fully supported the launching, in 2017, of the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, of which the President of the Slovak Republic, Her Excellency Zuzana Čaputová, is a proud member.

Pursuant to the recently published Action for Peacekeeping Plus priorities for 2021-2023, the accountability of peacekeepers and all members of United Nations operations and missions to the populations whom they serve is a crucial component of our commitment to protecting and maintaining a violence-free environment. Effective prevention and implementation of misconduct risk management tools, together with a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual-based violence, are effective tools to mitigate the threat of sexual-based violence by members of missions.

In line with the latest recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, we would like to emphasize the need to prioritize the prevention of and response to sexual-based violence, including sexual violence in conflict, as an important component of the protection-of-civilian mandates. Women peacekeepers play a positive role in the protection of civilians, including in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict.

Turning to the 2020 report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312), Slovakia thanks the Secretary-General for this report, which highlights relevant trends and developments and contains a set of wide-ranging pertinent recommendations. Those recommendations include the demand for a

complete cessation, with immediate effect, of all acts of sexual violence by all parties to armed conflict, the inclusion of sexual violence in sanctions designations and accountability, including by referring situations to the International Criminal Court. We believe that the Security Council, as well as individual States and international organizations, should deliberate and act upon those recommendations.

I wish to reiterate the importance of having gender-sensitive security sector reform strategies throughout their planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. We believe that Member States should redouble their efforts related to security sector reform not only to address but also to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. Where and as mandated, host State efforts to strengthen justice and accountability within security sector reform and implement survivor-centred approaches for the prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict should be supported.

The limited participation of women in the security sector institutions continues to impact the capacity of Governments to effectively prevent conflicts and respond to the security needs of all members of their population. Therefore, the promotion of women's meaningful participation in the security sector is critical in efforts to build inclusive, accountable and legitimate institutions for sustainable peace and development.

In conclusion, the whole world is currently facing a surge of unprecedented crises engendered by the coronavirus disease pandemic, which continues to have a grave impact on women and girls, both within and outside conflicts. The international community must come together to tackle those challenges. Civilians, among them women and girls, are paying the highest price, facing systematic violence and oppression. We need to redouble our efforts to deliver changes on the ground in favour of women, girls and societies in regions affected by conflict.

Annex 62

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the United Nations

We wish to thank the Vietnamese presidency for organizing this debate and the invited speakers for their briefings and testimony. Slovenia aligns itself with the statements submitted on behalf of the European Union (annex 37) and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (annex 28). We would like to make some additional remarks in our national capacity.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities, which has also led to a global surge in sexual and gender-based violence as a shadow pandemic. With additional barriers to access to shelters, clinics, redress and reporting, the pandemic has highlighted the imperative of a survivor-centred approach to sexual and gender-based violence, which must become an integral part of the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. That inherently demands women's and survivors' full, meaningful and inclusive participation in decision-making processes. Access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and psychosocial and economic support must be part of the comprehensive rights-based support and assistance to victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual violence in conflict.

In its resolutions, the Security Council condemned sexual violence in conflict and affirmed that it presents a threat to international peace and security when used as a tactic of war. We are appalled by the persistence of sexual violence in conflict and the low level of compliance by parties to conflict reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/312). It is particularly alarming that parties to armed conflict continue to use sexual violence as a tactic of war and political pressure to advance their objectives.

To achieve lasting and durable peace, the prohibition of sexual violence is a must, and impunity for such acts cannot be an option. International mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, play an important role in that regard. Slovenia supports initiatives that aim to strengthen international criminal law, policies and practices to address sexual violence in conflict more effectively. In that respect, Slovenia supports the Hague Principles on Sexual Violence in order to enhance the understanding of what constitutes an act of sexual violence in conflict from the perspective of its survivors.

We are encouraged by the positive developments indicated in the Secretary-General report, particularly the cases of conviction of perpetrators of sexual violence by national courts. Slovenia continues to support the calls and recommendations to the Security Council to integrate conflict-related sexual violence into the work of its sanctions committees by designating sexual violence as a stand-alone criterion to sexual violence for sanctions.

For the period of 2021-2025, Slovenia reaffirms its commitments to the global initiative Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. Slovenia is committed to advocating for the inclusion of gender equality, prevention and response to gender-based violence.

Slovenia continues to finance projects on gender-based violence in emergencies. Gender-based violence prevention is included in project design and reporting for the majority of humanitarian projects funded by the Government of Slovenia. For the period of 2020-2022, we have earmarked €400,000 to support two humanitarian projects, selected at the public tender for non-governmental organization proposals focusing on gender-based violence and raising awareness of

child marriages in Lebanon. Slovenia also supports the Response to Sexual Violence of the International Committee of the Red Cross for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for which we pledged a multiannual contribution in 2019.

Revealing the full impact of gender inequalities, the coronavirus disease pandemic has demonstrated the devastating consequences of unfulfilled commitments. It has threatened the progress that we have achieved so far. A gender-transformative recovery, with women's full and meaningful participation and leadership, must be at the forefront of our efforts to build a more equal violence- and impunity-free world.

Annex 63**Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Mathu Joyini**

We wish to thank Viet Nam for convening this annual debate on women and peace and security: conflict-related sexual violence, which provides the Security Council an opportunity to take stock of progress made in the implementation of decisions taken to address the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence.

The advent of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic threatened the progress made by the entire United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in addressing conflict-related sexual violence. We regret that acts of sexual violence against women and girls persist in both conflict and post-conflict situations and have also become a tactic in the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/312), the prevailing COVID-19 situation has unfortunately revealed the existing gaps in our efforts to curb sexual violence in conflict and to attend to the needs of victims and survivors of such crimes.

Women and girls in conflict situations, particularly refugees and those internally displaced, have become more vulnerable to sexual violence during the pandemic. We are concerned by the reported harmful coping mechanisms by some at internally displaced settings that have resulted in an increase in sexual exploitation and child marriages. Moreover, we are concerned that the pandemic has in some situations resulted in the closure of safety shelters and clinics being repurposed for the COVID-19 response. That makes it more challenging for affected women to receive necessary services and support, especially access to sexual and reproductive health services. Such developments further illustrate the severity of the plight of women and girls in conflict situations.

The continued existing and emerging challenges to women have led to the recently concluded sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to focus on "women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls". This theme resonates and aptly captures the spirit of our discussion today because the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment is vital to addressing many challenges faced by women, including sexual violence.

We wish to focus our statement on the following two points: first, progress, achievements and best practices; and, secondly, challenges and the way forward.

In terms of progress, achievements and best practices, South Africa believes that, over the past 20 years, the Security Council has developed a robust normative framework on women and peace and security that includes fighting the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence. It is commendable that most peace operations mandated by the Security Council include addressing sexual violence, in line with that normative framework.

We recognize that the gap is not the lack of a normative framework, but rather one of implementation. Resolution 2493 (2019), which was unanimously adopted by the Security Council in October 2019, reinforces the need to fully implement all resolutions on women and peace and security, including conflict-related sexual violence. Through that normative framework, we acknowledge that notable progress has been made in improving the international response to conflict-related sexual violence, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, since the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), a survivor-centred approach has been embraced to address the plight of victims of sexual violence.

Civil society and women's organizations are playing a greater role in advocating for the rights of victims and survivors of sexual violence. Women protection networks and women's organizations, in collaboration with the national authorities and the international community, are positively contributing to providing necessary support to the survivors of sexual violence because of their outreach abilities, especially in local communities and in remote areas. In that context, the Security Council has increasingly been inviting those role players to its meetings to exchange views on matters concerning women, which is a positive development. Our ability to utilize virtual briefings for such engagements has also been a positive development.

We also recognize the vital role of women's protection advisers in United Nations peace operations, contributing primarily to developing and enhancing the monitoring and analysis of conflict-related sexual violence trends, as well as providing responses when required. Innovative ways such as one-stop centres to address structural challenges to providing services to victims and survivors, particularly during the pandemic, have proven useful for accessing services. While we recognize the use of virtual platforms to provide some services to survivors during the pandemic, a balanced approach is necessary, as some services must be provided in-person rather than virtually.

With respect to accountability, we commend the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General for assisting national authorities in building institutional safeguards against impunity, as part of broader efforts to reinforce the rule of law, which is critical to addressing the needs of the survivors of sexual violence. We thus note the progress made in some of the countries affected, such as the successful prosecutions of the perpetrators of those heinous crimes through courts, mobile courts and mobile military courts. The latter are best practices that can be replicated in other situations where there is lack of capacity, access and coverage.

South Africa also commends the progress that the Security Council is making on increasingly listing and designating for targeted sanctions perpetrators of the use of sexual violence in conflict, as evidenced by the recent listings of implicated parties in the Central African Republic and Yemen.

South Africa notes that the joint field missions to affected countries by the United Nations and regional organizations convey a positive message of solidarity and support to the women and children affected by conflict. Over the past few years, the joint missions have been one of the effective initiatives of the United Nations and the African Union's Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security.

As a way forward to existing challenges, we propose the following.

In terms of prevention and protection, there is a need to improve threat analysis and early warning in order to inform responses to counter acts of sexual violence in situations of conflict.

Since the work of the United Nations and other humanitarian service providers is contingent on the availability of financial resources, it is imperative to address the impact of COVID-19, particularly its diversion of resources from conflict-related sexual violence programmes and activities. Therefore, South Africa supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General for Member States to address chronic funding shortfalls for combating conflict-related sexual violence by providing predictable financial support to the conflict-related sexual violence multi-partner trust fund.

We urge the international community to find innovative ways to address persisting barriers to the fight against sexual violence that deter victims from reporting these crimes, such as victim-blaming, stigmatization, fear of reprisals, a

culture of impunity and lack of provision of medical, legal and psychosocial services by national authorities and institutions, mostly affected by lack of finances to provide free access to these services, especially legal representation for women.

We also wish to underline the importance of supporting inclusive national ownership of processes concerning justice, accountability and redress for those crimes consistent with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The primary objective is to build trust and confidence between the national authorities and institutions and the survivors as well as the population. That will help to address the needs of victims such as rehabilitation, justice and reintegration.

South Africa believes that it should be mandatory for survivors in conflict and post-conflict situations to access comprehensive medical, psychosocial and legal services. Mobile service centres could be a possibility in order to ameliorate access and coverage challenges.

We further believe that it is important to attend to the information gap that exists as raised in the report of the Secretary-General. In that context, we encourage the United Nations to improve its communication strategies to raise awareness about the availability and accessibility of the services it provides to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

South Africa also believes that the perpetrators of sexual violence must be held accountable for their crimes and brought to justice. More attention should therefore be given to strengthening investigation and prosecution capacities in the countries affected for victims to receive justice.

We underline the need for regional cooperation, including cross-border monitoring and response capabilities, to address cross-border and cross-regional conflict situations where women and girls are also targeted for acts of sexual violence.

The issue of children born of sexual violence remains of concern. In that regard, we look forward to receiving the special report on the plight and rights of children born of conflict-related sexual violence and their mothers.

We wish to conclude by reiterating our request for the annual report of the Secretary-General to also include information on sexual violence in situations of occupation such as in Western Sahara and Palestine. It is a glaring omission in the report that the situation of women in these situations, which are items on the agenda of the Security Council, are not reflected therein.

Annex 64**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Spain aligns itself with the statements made by the European Union (annex 37) and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. It also welcomes the fact that for the first time the United Nations LGBTI Core Group is delivering a statement before the Security Council (annex 70); Spain fully subscribes thereto.

Spain congratulates Viet Nam on having convened this important open debate, especially in a year in which we still have clearly in mind the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and in which sexual violence has increased as a result of the pandemic. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/312) and his calls for commitment and action. In that respect, Spain will continue to support the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten.

Spain is a pioneer in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda with respect to its fundamental pillars of participation, prevention and protection. The prevention and eradication of sexual violence in conflict situations and the fight against impunity are elements key to advancing with respect to all pillars, including the full and effective participation of women in all their diversity in peace processes and at all stages of conflict resolution. The vulnerability of women and girls in armed conflict and their exposure to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict requires us to remain especially vigilant and proactive and to defend the sexual and reproductive rights of all women and girls.

For that reason, Spain incorporates that priority in its feminist foreign policy, which makes gender equality and the rights of all women and girls a central objective of all its efforts. Through its principles and priority lines of action, Spain will support the fight against impunity for crimes of sexual violence, promoting both the involvement of the competent international courts and the adoption of sanctions when appropriate.

We are convinced of the importance of having robust regulatory frameworks against sexual violence that guarantee the effective implementation of mechanisms for the persecution and protection of victims, as well as reparations. The coronavirus disease and its impact on the increase in violence against women and girls make it more necessary than ever to have a renewed commitment by countries, international organizations and other actors in the international community. The declaration of assistance and protection services as essential services, the support of individuals and organizations that provide assistance to victims, and the strengthening of international, regional and national justice and accountability systems are actions that must be taken urgently.

For all the aforementioned reasons, and in keeping with our country's internal policies, Spain has bolstered its commitments in that area through its second national plan for women, peace and security, the future humanitarian diplomacy plan, Spanish cooperation and humanitarian action programmes, including the fresh commitments made by Spain in the framework of the Call to Action to combat sexual violence.

Multilateralism is the most effective framework for fighting sexual violence and ensuring lasting peacebuilding. Spain supported the declaration on strengthened multilateralism on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations based on the firm conviction that multilateralism is the best way to make progress in eradicating all forms of violence. The creation in 2020 of a Group of Friends for the elimination of violence against women, of which Spain is a part, is a step in that direction.

Annex 65

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, Pascale Baeriswyl

Switzerland thanks Viet Nam for having organized this debate and the speakers for their contributions.

We are concerned about sexual violence in conflicts around the world. While the majority of survivors of sexual violence are women and girls, men and boys also suffer from such violence, as recognized in resolution 2467 (2019). The stigmatization and exclusion of victims can lead to even more unreported cases. As Nobel Peace Prize laureates Dr. Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad jointly told the Council ahead of the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019),

“without the will of the international community and imposed consequences, [these] crimes will continue to be perpetrated”.

Switzerland would like to highlight three priorities that should guide the collective mobilization against sexual violence and its consequences.

First, we must take a community-based approach when taking care of survivors of sexual violence, including children born of rape. The rights and needs of survivors, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, must be central to our actions. Switzerland concretely supports the strengthening of community networks and networks of solidarity with those affected, for example in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Great Lakes region. In accordance with resolution 2467 (2019), we call for support for all community-based prevention and response efforts, in particular those of civil society and local organizations.

Secondly, we must address the persistent lack of accountability at the national and international levels for sexual violence in conflict. Switzerland supports the efforts of the International Criminal Court to combat impunity for sexual and gender-based crimes. Switzerland also collaborates with national actors to facilitate access to justice for survivors in order to enable them to play a role in preventing and combating sexual violence in conflict. We call on the Security Council to pursue the fight against impunity with all means at its disposal.

Thirdly, we must urgently address the challenges of preventing and combating sexual violence in conflict, which have been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. Switzerland urges all parties to armed conflict to respect and ensure respect for the prohibition of rape and other forms of sexual violence, in accordance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and resolution 2532 (2020). It supports the appeal made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and her tireless efforts while stressing that Member States have the primary responsibility to protect all persons from acts of sexual violence. Switzerland welcomes the various provisions in resolutions 2532 (2020) and 2565 (2021) in that respect but calls on the Security Council to engage more systematically in monitoring the implementation of those resolutions, including in the context of the geographical situations on its agenda.

Furthermore, we would also refer to the declaration of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Annex 66

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations

At the outset, we would like to thank Viet Nam for having convened today's open debate, which enables us to assess the progress made in addressing the scourge of sexual violence in armed conflict and the challenges that emerge or continue to require the attention of the international community.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2021/312), Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten for her valuable briefing and other briefers for their insightful presentations.

Over the years, Member States, the United Nations system and the international community have taken important steps to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict. Global awareness about the effects of armed conflict on women has increased, in particular with the adoption of the ground-breaking Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and all other subsequent resolutions and decisions on women and peace and security. Through those outcomes, the Security Council has recognized that sexual violence constitutes a threat to international peace and security when used systematically as a tactic of war.

Despite that encouraging progress, however, conflict-related sexual violence continues to be widespread and employed as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism.

In his latest report, the Secretary-General once again points to the large number of cases of sexual violence globally. The report also reveals that at a time when the Secretary-General has called for a global ceasefire to focus on defeating the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the pandemic has amplified gender-based inequality and given rise to new protection concerns for women and girls while making access to essential services even more challenging for survivors. Lockdowns have exacerbated existing structural, institutional and sociocultural barriers to reporting sexual violence in conflict.

Turkey strongly condemns sexual violence in conflict, which has consequences for all affected. In addition to its devastating impact on survivors, it has broad and long-lasting effect on communities and societies as a whole for generations.

Our responsibility must be to bring justice, recognition and reparations to the survivors of those horrendous crimes. The Secretary-General rightfully identifies accountability for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence as a key element of his prevention strategy.

Sexual and gender-based violence has been a constant feature of the conflict in Syria since its inception. Unfortunately, millions of Syrians, particularly women and girls, continue to live under the threat of sexual violence.

In depicting the disturbing nature of the sexual violence carried out in Syria, it is essential to refrain from employing a selective and restraining approach towards sampling. That is particularly important in order to avoid creating the impression that the international community could overlook the sexual violence committed by certain groups. In that vein, we would like to recall the fact that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)/Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat (PYD)/ People's Protection Units (YPG) terrorist organizations resort to torture and sexual violence in the detention centres in areas under their control, as confirmed in the past by independent organizations and United Nations investigative bodies.

Another word of caution is necessary regarding the explicit referral to the PKK/YPG-affiliated, separatist, self-proclaimed entity in north-east Syria as "The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria" in paragraph 57 of the annual

report. That entity is closely linked to the PKK/YPG terrorist organization, which, in pursuit of its separatist agenda, is undermining the principle of territorial integrity of Syria, contrary to the relevant Security Council resolutions on Syria, including resolution 2254 (2015). In that respect, it is important to avoid such wording in United Nations reports, which not only contravenes Security Council resolutions but could also be abused by the terrorist entity for legitimacy to enhance its separatist agenda.

As a neighbouring country that has opened its doors to Syrians fleeing war and violence in their own country, Turkey now hosts close to 4 million Syrians, of whom approximately 1.7 million are women. Turkey is making every effort to provide security and safety to Syrian women and girls who have fled the conflict in Syria. We attach utmost importance to their empowerment and self-reliance as well as to their protection from sexual and gender-based violence.

Since 2014, psychological and social support has been provided to a large number of refugees to ensure their adaptation to our country and access to services. In addition to benefiting from the same health-care services provided to Turkish citizens, refugee women who are victims of violence are protected subject to the taking of required legal steps. All women seeking asylum in Turkey who are identified as victims of violence have the right to stay in women's shelters. They also receive assistance from violence-prevention and monitoring centres.

We will also continue to support reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts for Turkmen, Yazidi, Shabak and Christian Iraqi victims of Da'esh. In this respect, we welcome the Yazidi Women Survivors Law that was recently enacted in Iraq.

As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, in October 2020, under the auspices of the United Nations, the federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments signed an agreement to provide security and services to facilitate the return of Yazidis to Sinjar. A precondition for this return is the full and proper implementation of the Sinjar agreement to normalize the situation and provide sustainable stability in Sinjar. So far, regrettably, no concrete progress has been achieved, either in the return of Yazidis to Sinjar or for the establishment of local security forces, as envisaged in the agreement. The cause of this delay is the armed resistance of the PKK terrorist organization and its affiliates. The deadlock that prolongs the plight of Yazidis is therefore still in place.

It should be borne in mind that although considerable legislative actions are under way to redress social fractures in the aftermath of Da'esh, the current delicate situation on the ground thwarts progress. Legislative steps can only become effective and meaningful once Yazidis and other local communities are able to return safely to their ancestral lands. To this end, the international community's solidarity is required to confront the PKK terrorist organization, which is no less brutal than Da'esh. To add insult to injury, there are reportedly ex-Da'esh members operating within PKK-affiliated Sinjar Resistance Units in Sinjar, causing new trauma for Da'esh victims in the region. To fully normalize the situation on the ground, Yazidis must return freely to their homes in Sinjar, and the PKK should be eradicated from the region and from Iraq as a whole.

We appreciate the valuable United Nations efforts aimed at acknowledging cases of conflict-related sexual violence in all parts of Libya. At the same time, we should stress that the underreporting is a far graver issue for eastern Libya than other parts of the country, owing to lack of institutional monitoring mechanisms in the region. In this respect, it may also be useful to highlight the particular difficulties that international organizations and non-governmental organizations have faced in reporting cases of sexual violence.

The militia problem that has been kept up by the warlord Haftar is a systemic issue in eastern Libya, and there have been a considerable number of reports on

sexual violence committed by these armed militias. In this regard, reporting violations by these armed groups and underscoring the militia problem are important for preventing similar cases from happening in future.

It is also worth underlining that the atmosphere of fear in eastern Libya, as in many other conflict areas, is nurtured by the killing of women's rights activists. One example is Hanan Al-Barassi, an outspoken critic of sexual violence and rape against women by armed groups in eastern Libya, who was assassinated in Benghazi on 10 November 2020.

The findings of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar not only reminds us of the widespread and systematic brutal attacks, including sexual violence, against the Rohingya community in previous years, but also indicates that their plight persists. The ongoing displacement and discrimination and the significant risks of sexual violence against Rohingya women and children in camps have also been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions.

The involvement of the Myanmar army in sexual violence is worrisome. The lack of accountability and independent investigation as well as denial of access for international mechanisms further hamper the collective efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence in the country. Therefore, we expect the full implementation of the joint communiqué signed in 2018 between the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence.

Myanmar must address the root causes of the problem in Rakhine state and create the conditions necessary for peaceful coexistence and the safe return of refugees. We welcome the provisional measures announced by the International Court of Justice on 23 January 2020 and expect full compliance with these measures as well as due reporting on the allegations of sexual violence against the Rohingya.

The increasing number of protracted conflicts, forced displacements and humanitarian emergencies in the world create an environment conducive to the trafficking of women and girls. Trafficking often involves sexual violence and exploitation. As many traffickers have taken advantage of the emergence of COVID-19 to expand their criminal activities, the situation is more serious today than ever. The Secretary-General's report also confirms the nexus between sexual violence, conflict-driven human trafficking in persons and violent extremism. Turkey attaches utmost importance to the fight against human trafficking, which constitutes a serious violation of human rights and an offence to human dignity and integrity.

With that understanding, we fully support all international cooperation mechanisms in combating human trafficking. We are taking all necessary measures for effective implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. Furthermore, in December 2019, human trafficking was included as part of the "catalogue crimes" in the Turkish code of criminal procedure, which has considerably strengthened the judicial processes for tackling the crime.

The effective and resolute response to conflict-related sexual violence requires, inter alia, the empowerment of women and girls, the promotion of gender equality and ensuring access to justice and accountability for these crimes. It also necessitates the political will and concerted action of the international community as a whole.

I would like to conclude by underscoring that Turkey remains determined to continue contributing to international efforts aimed at addressing this challenge.

Annex 67

Statement by Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations, Sergiy Kyslytsya

Ukraine aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union (annex 37) and of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (annex 28), respectively.

Let me express my appreciation to the Vietnamese presidency of the Security Council for convening today's open debate on sexual violence in conflict. I also want to thank the Secretary-General for preparing the report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2021/312), which covers the period from January to December 2020.

At the outset, I would like to reaffirm Ukraine's commitment to the zero-tolerance policy with regard to all forms of sexual violence. We stand in solidarity with victims and survivors of such crimes. Last year, we commemorated the most important documentary milestones in the history of the women and peace and security agenda, namely, the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, whose significance we cannot underestimate.^[P. 1] Unfortunately, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has brought additional challenges to the global security environment and only worsened the situation by adding to existing international problems. It is therefore significant that the Secretary-General highlighted in his recent report that

“COVID-19 gave rise to new, gender-specific protection concerns linked with: militarization, as well as checkpoint and border closures, which restricted the operating space for women's organizations; sexual harassment of women health-care workers and women in isolation and treatment centres; and sexual violence against women detained for alleged curfew violations” (S/2021/312, *para. 3*).

We are deeply convinced that such forms of sexual violence as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced marriage, enforced sterilization or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, girls, men or boys are directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. It must therefore be a matter of our concern and immediate response. We call on the Secretary-General to preserve the issue of investigations and prosecutions of all these violations as a priority matter.

Ukraine is ready to actively participate in collective efforts aimed at ensuring that victims and survivors can access the comprehensive support they need to fully recover from these violations and be able to reintegrate into their societies. Such collective efforts should address the specific needs, perspectives and wishes of the most vulnerable victims and survivors and those living with disabilities.

The report before us, which focuses on only 18 countries, reveals the difficulties stemming from the underreporting of incidents as a result of intimidation and stigmatization of survivors and of limited capacities of the United Nations staff. We expect that future reports of the Secretary-General on the topic will be more comprehensive and reflect situations in major conflict-affected zones and occupied territories. In this regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation to continue to incorporate sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for sanctions, including when used as a tool of reprisal against women in public and political life.

For Ukraine, the issue of promoting the women and peace and security agenda has taken on new importance since 2014, which marked the beginning of an armed

aggression of the Russian Federation against our country. We have faced seven years of suffering and fighting for the protection of human rights and for prevention of all forms of violations and discrimination. Russia's armed aggression turned Ukraine into the country with the world's ninth largest number of internally displaced persons: some 1.5 million people, 60 per cent of whom are women.

Protected populations in the occupied territories face intimidation, detention and ill treatment, as well as physical and sexual violence. The occupied territories have become home for discriminative practices and gender inequality. As reported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on numerous occasions, the prison known as Izolyatsia in Donetsk stands as an emblematic example of crimes being committed against detainees in the occupied areas, including acts of sexual violence.

As a party to the conflict, Russia continues to destabilize Ukraine, especially through actions in occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, disregarding the commitments it had made under the Minsk agreements. However, notwithstanding the ongoing external aggression it was facing, Ukraine adopted, on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, its second national action plan to implement this resolution, which emphasizes the important role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The new action plan was developed according to a results-oriented management methodology.

The second action plan provides for the broad participation of various groups of women in its implementation, including those that were not included in the first action plan, namely, veterans, family members of the dead or missing, and women in volunteer organizations. Furthermore, the second national action plan focuses on achieving greater participation of women in decision-making, in particular in national security and defence, peacebuilding and so on.

I would like to highlight the fact that women constitute 23.6 per cent of Ukraine's armed forces. This number has increased over 15-fold since 2008, from 1,800 to 29,760, of whom 900 are senior officers. Among these numbers, 15.2 per cent are military personnel, and 8.4 per cent are civilians. Of the personnel defending Ukraine against Russia's aggression, over 10 per cent are women. Woman volunteers provide tangible support at the front line. Another Government priority is the reintegration of veteran women, as they face difficulties when they return to civilian life, including difficulties in finding employment, obtaining free medical services and overcoming stereotypes commonly held by the public.

The Government of Ukraine has enhanced its efforts aimed at ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres of public life, as well as necessary support and reintegration for women victims of sexual violence as the result of the ongoing foreign aggression.

Ukraine will continue its efforts aimed at promoting awareness of the women and peace and security agenda and strengthening its implementation within the United Nations, in particular to advance women's rights and protect them from sexual and gender-based violence.

Annex 68

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations

The United Arab Emirates thanks Viet Nam for organizing today's open debate, and also thanks Special Representative Pramila Patten and the other briefers for their powerful insights.

It has now been more than 20 years since the Security Council, for the first time, formally called on parties in conflict to protect women and girls from wartime sexual violence. Nevertheless, the number of these crimes continues to rise, and perpetrators still largely manage to escape accountability for their heinous actions. With the coronavirus disease pandemic in its second year, the harrowing stories and the frequency of these crimes have only increased. In this critical moment, the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence should be at the heart of the work the United Nations and its States Members. In war-torn countries, where social distancing is considered a luxury and where lockdown measures have intensified, women and girls have paid a heavy price.

In northern Syria, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic noted reports of at least 30 rapes in February 2020 alone. It can only be assumed that the number of unidentified and unreported cases is considerably higher. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo documented 1,053 cases of conflict-related sexual violence last year. In Yemen, sexual violence-related crime, including sexual violence against men and boys perpetrated by the Houthis or in Houthi-operated facilities, has been well documented. In Libya, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya documented two incidents of kidnapping and rape, including gang rape, of asylum seekers in May 2020. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic documented 240 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including 221 rapes or attempted rapes and 12 cases of sexual slavery.

Regrettably, conflict-related sexual violence seems to have become the norm in today's world. If the new normal means that women are brutally raped in their homes and girls are sexually assaulted on their way to school, then it must be our primary duty to change the status quo.

Thirteen years have passed since the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), which recognized that sexual violence can be used as a tactic of war. Since then, States Members of the United Nations have been working tirelessly to ensure that women and girls no longer have to fear for their safety. The United Arab Emirates would like to share some of the efforts it has undertaken to that end.

At the outset, we are pleased to announce that in March this year the United Arab Emirates formally launched its first national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. Aligned with the pillars of the women and peace and security agenda, the plan focuses on women's meaningful and effective participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as the protection of women from sexual and gender-based violence.

The United Arab Emirates is also committed to making progress globally. We are proud to serve as a member of the Board of the Generation Equality Forum Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action. We were also honoured to co-host both "End Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises" conferences, held in 2019 and 2020, which raised hundreds of millions of dollars for programming, mostly for fragile and conflict settings. As part of the my

country's \$10-million package on sexual and gender-based violence, we pledged \$2 million in 2020 through the United Nations Population Fund to address the sexual and gender-based violence experienced by the Rohingya Muslim minority, as well as to enhance access to sexual and reproductive health services for victims of sexual violence. Earlier this year, the United Arab Emirates also expanded its contribution to Nadia's Initiative in order to support the reconstruction of Sinjar and the voluntary return of survivors of sexual violence in safety and dignity to their homeland. We very much support its vision to empower the brave Yazidi women of Iraq.

The United Arab Emirates takes note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/312), on conflict-related sexual violence, and would like to highlight several recommendations.

First, we call on Member States to tackle the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, including structural gender inequality and harmful social norms that lead to victim-blaming and the stigmatization of survivors. Fighting sexual violence in the long run must go beyond merely responding to it — it also requires prevention.

Secondly, we must all work together to guarantee the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, including girls and survivors of sexual violence, in decision-making. The United Arab Emirates is pleased to announce that we will be concluding an agreement with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs to undertake projects focusing on increasing women's meaningful participation and leadership in political processes.

Thirdly, with the assistance of the United Nations, we must work together to guarantee that law enforcement agencies have the capacity and are equipped to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases of conflict-related sexual violence, and are empowered by law to do so. The United Arab Emirates calls on the Security Council to devote more attention to sexual and gender-based violence, including by inviting the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to brief the Council more regularly and facilitating the effective deployment of gender advisers and women's protection advisers to United Nations peace operations.

In conclusion, fighting sexual and gender-based violence will remain a key priority for the United Arab Emirates during its term on the Security Council from 2022 to 2023.

Annex 69

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations, Abdullah Al-Saadi

I thank you for convening this open debate on the very important subject of sexual violence in conflict. I also wish to extend my thanks and gratitude to all the briefers for their informative presentations.

As the world faces intersecting crises, the most vulnerable groups, namely women and children, bear the brunt of conflicts and humanitarian crises as victims of sexual violence, and suffer reduced access to health care and support services.

Globally, both in situations of conflict and peace, the pandemic has exacerbated the disproportionate socioeconomic and childcare burden borne by women. That burden is even higher in conflict situations like Yemen, where women face unique security and socioeconomic challenges.

In Yemen, women's rights, safety and public and political participation has seen remarkable progress since the start of the transitional political process in 2012. Since then, women have been at the heart of shaping the present and future of Yemen, including through their meaningful involvement in the National Dialogue Conference, which gathered 565 participants. Women met the 30 per cent participation quota set for the Conference, and of the 17 members who drafted the Constitution of the new federal State, four were women.

Unfortunately, the hard-won progress made in this area was partially halted, and even reversed in some respects, following the coup of the Houthi militia in 2014. In areas under Houthi control, women continue to be subjected to a full range of threats and human rights violations and abuses by the Houthis, including arbitrary detention, sexual violence, suppression of their rights to express their opinion, to demonstrate and to demand the release of their family members imprisoned by the Houthis. Further, the Houthi militias continue to target women, in particular, on account of their activism against the militia's practices. The Houthi militia have detained hundreds of Yemeni women in private prisons and have subjected them to various types of torture and violations, including rape and forced disappearance, as documented by the Panel of Experts. In addition, many cases go unreported due to fear of reprisals, stigma, pressure from the community or lack of services.

Most recently, in furtherance of their practices of terrorizing Yemeni women, the Houthi militia abducted a young Yemeni model and actress due to the nature of her job and detained her in a secret prison. On the heels of the death of Sultan Zabin, who was recently subjected to Security Council sanctions, this heinous crime confirms the systematic nature of Houthi oppression and crimes against women. In that regard, the Government of Yemen calls on the international community, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and all women's protection organizations to play an active role in highlighting the challenges and violations facing Yemeni women in Houthi-controlled areas, to show solidarity with them, to condemn these outrageous Houthi crimes, to exert pressure on the Houthi terrorist militia to stop using women for extortion and to unconditionally release all kidnapped women held in their private prisons. Silence will only embolden the perpetrators.

For its part, the Government of Yemen has ratified international conventions and protocols related to the protection of women's rights and respect for international humanitarian law, including international covenants to protect women during armed conflict, and has also incorporated those rights into its national laws and legislative framework so as to ensure rights for all, without gender discrimination, and to enable women to contribute to the economic, social and cultural fields.

In October, in line with the Government's commitment to respecting human rights and promoting the concepts of justice, equality and partnership, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour adopted a national action plan for 2020 to 2022 in order to implement the women and peace and security agenda. Among other things, the plan focuses on implementing the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000), strengthening partnerships with non-governmental organizations in order to combat extremism, enhance women's participation and empower them to play a meaningful role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Before I conclude, allow me to reiterate that although substantial progress has been made, there is still much work to be done in the years ahead. The Government of Yemen recognizes the important role of women in achieving a fair and sustainable peace. In fact, in all previous United Nations-led peace talks, women have been represented only in Government delegations. The Government continues to be committed to protecting women, advancing their rights and ensuring their minimum participation level of 30 per cent in all Government bodies, in accordance with the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference.

Annex 70**Statement by the United Nations LGBTI Core Group**

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

On the occasion of this annual open debate on sexual violence in conflict, the States members of the United Nations LGBTI Core Group are honoured to present a written statement to the Security Council for the first time.

The LGBTI Core Group is an informal cross-regional group established in 2008. The group is co-chaired by Argentina and the Netherlands, and includes Albania, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Uruguay and the European Union, as well as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and non-governmental organizations Human Rights Watch and OutRight Action International.

The LGBTI Core Group recognizes the need to ensure that the work of the Security Council is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all individuals affected by conflict, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. In that respect, we thank the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for chairing this important meeting. We pay tribute to all victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including victims of such violence and discrimination on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics.

The members of the LGBTI Core Group are deeply concerned that, despite the robust framework put in place by the Security Council over the past decade to prevent and address sexual violence in conflict, the level of compliance by parties to conflict remains insufficient in most cases.

It is alarming and unacceptable that actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity could increase a person's chances of becoming the target of rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriage or other forms of conflict-related sexual violence.

We are concerned that in recent years the number of reports of conflict-related sexual violence committed on the basis of a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity has increased in a number of conflicts.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about the widespread underreporting of such crimes, as well as retaliation, discrimination against, and stigmatization of those individuals, which continue to be the norm for conflict-related sexual violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity, thereby contributing to widespread impunity for the perpetrators. In particular, the fear of stigmatization and reprisals, unfavourable cultural norms and a lack of awareness, adequate support services and accountability for survivors all contribute to underreporting and must therefore be addressed.

In that regard, we call on all parties to conflicts to respect international law, including international humanitarian law, and human rights in order to break the vicious cycle of sexual violence, underreporting, impunity and retaliation, and call on them provide targeted services to address the needs of LGBTI victims and survivors of sexual violence. We welcome the role of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in that regard and encourage them to take into consideration the special needs of victims and survivors

targeted on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics.

The members of the United Nations LGBTI Core Group recognize the interdependence between peace and security and the sustainable agenda principle of leaving no one behind, as embodied in Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions.

Furthermore, the Core Group underscores the need to adopt a survivor-centred and human-rights-based approach and to provide relevant services to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. We must also ensure that survivors' rights are respected and that all victims of sexual violence have access to justice, assistance, reparations and judicial redress. That includes access to comprehensive specialized services such as psychosocial services, health care, sexual and reproductive health services, legal and livelihood support and services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence that are adapted to their needs and provided without discrimination. Moreover, in the adjudication of related asylum claims, the victims' LGBTI status and the concomitant vulnerability to violence must also be duly considered.

Member States should recognize that all survivors, including those who are targeted on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, are unique individuals with different experiences and needs, and that all support to assist and empower survivors must be adapted to the context, paying particular attention to multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities.
