



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8514th meeting
 Tuesday, 23 April 2019, 10 a.m.
 New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Maas (Germany)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Kenes
China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Nguema Ndong
France	Mr. Delattre
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland	Mr. Radomski
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
South Africa	Mr. Nkosi
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Lord Ahmad
United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Sexual violence in conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2019/280)

Letter dated 11 April 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2019/313)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Sexual violence in conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2019/280)

Letter dated 11 April 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2019/313)

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, Ministers and other distinguished representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Dr. Denis Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize laureate; Ms. Nadia Murad, Nobel Peace Prize laureate; Ms. Amal Clooney, barrister; and Ms. Inas Miloud, Co-Founder and Director of the Tamazight Women's Movement.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: Mr. Robert

Mardini, Permanent Observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the United Nations; Her Excellency Ms. Mara Marinaki, Principle Adviser on Gender and the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security of the European External Action Service; Ms. Clare Hutchinson, Special Representative of the NATO Secretary-General for Women, Peace and Security; Her Excellency Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Her Excellency Mrs. Jeanne d'Arc Byaje, Permanent Observer of the Economic Community of Central African States to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/280, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence.

I wish to also draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/313, which contains a letter dated 11 April 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: I thank Germany and His Excellency the Foreign Minister, Mr. Heiko Maas, for hosting this important debate. I welcome Nobel Peace Prize laureates Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege and thank them for their extraordinary work. Their advocacy highlights two vital elements of our response to the crime of sexual violence in conflict: the call for justice and the need for support and assistance to victims. While their efforts originate in Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they have a global impact. The United Nations is proud to work with victims and survivors to support the movements that they have started. I also welcome Ms. Inas Miloud and Ms. Amal Clooney and thank them for their activism and advocacy.

It is 10 years since the establishment of the mandate and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Over the course of the decade, there has been a paradigm shift in the understanding of the crime of conflict-related sexual violence, its impact on international peace and security, the response required to prevent and end it, and the full range of services required by survivors. That is the result of advocacy and action by individuals, Governments, non-governmental organizations and institutions. I commend all those involved, including the Council, which has established a robust normative framework to address the issue. An increasing number of Governments have shown a willingness to pursue justice and provide services for survivors. Advocacy groups have demonstrated beyond doubt that sexual violence is deliberately used as a tactic of war to terrorize people, dehumanize communities and destabilize societies so that they struggle to recover for years or even decades.

Local civil society organizations, many of them women's organizations, are at the forefront of our efforts to prevent this crime and to provide redress for it, and they deserve our strong and consistent support. Individual heroes, including those with us today, have shown great courage in speaking out on the enormous and lasting damage done by the crime, which is most often perpetrated against women and girls.

The United Nations system has stepped up by taking action to implement the resolutions passed by the Council on women and peace and security. To give just a few examples, United Nations peacekeepers now receive consistent training to prevent and to respond to sexual violence in conflict. We have strengthened our ability to investigate crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, deploying dedicated investigators to United Nations commissions of inquiry and to national and international courts. We have improved our data and analysis of such crimes — an essential basis for successful prevention. And we are supporting Governments to improve their response and services for survivors.

Despite all those efforts, the reality on the ground has not changed. Sexual violence continues to be a horrific feature of conflicts around the world.

Throughout my career, I have heard first-hand accounts of sexual violence in war zones, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the former Yugoslavia. In Bangladesh last year, Rohingya refugees

told me of the gang rape of women and girls in their homes before they fled Myanmar. That is why the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, and I pledged earlier this year to step up efforts to prevent and end such crimes and to put victims and survivors at the centre of our response. At the same time, we urged Governments to do more to address the issue and to support survivors.

We must recognize that sexual violence in conflict largely affects women and girls because it is closely linked to broader issues of gender inequality and discrimination. Prevention must therefore be based on promoting women's rights and gender equality in all areas before, during and after conflict. That must include women's full and effective participation in political, economic and social life and ensuring accessible and responsive justice and security institutions.

We must also recognize that there are links between sexual violence in conflict, gender inequality and discrimination and violent extremism and terrorism. Extremists and terrorists often build their ideologies around the subjugation of women and girls and use sexual violence in various ways, from forced marriage to virtual enslavement. Sexual violence continues to fuel conflict and severely impacts the prospects for lasting peace.

My report (S/2019/280) outlines a series of recommendations that are intended to provide a comprehensive approach to conflict-related sexual violence. Prevention is a strong theme running through the recommendations. I encourage the Council to include the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in all its country-specific resolutions and in the mandates of peace operations. I also encourage the Council to integrate the issue of conflict-related sexual violence fully into the work of its sanctions committees and to include measures to prevent these crimes in its initiatives on security sector and justice reform. Strengthening prevention in the context of the Council's peacemaking efforts is also critical.

Where women are part of peacekeeping missions, we know that reporting on and protection from sexual violence increase. When women are at the peace table, there is greater likelihood of accountability for these crimes. When women are part of ceasefire monitoring, they can ensure that gender-based crimes are monitored and reported.

My recommendations also stress the need to strengthen justice and accountability. Despite a handful of high-profile convictions, there is widespread impunity for sexual violence in conflict. Most of these crimes are never reported or investigated, much less prosecuted. My recommendations include increasing support to national authorities as they reform laws, improve their capacities to investigate and prosecute these crimes and protect survivors who testify from stigma and fear of reprisal. They also emphasize the need for greater support for survivors and their families, including health care, reparations and other assistance.

I commend the efforts of Dr. Mukwege to create a global fund to support victims and call on all Member States to contribute so that the fund can transform the lives of those affected and provide a measure of redress.

I thank the members of the Council for their leadership over the past decade. This agenda has benefitted from both the commitment and the consensus of Council members, and I encourage Council members to continue working together to reconcile differences. The global response to these crimes must ensure the punishment of the perpetrators and comprehensive support to survivors, in full respect for their human rights. Together, we can and must replace impunity with justice and indifference with action.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Patten.

Ms. Patten: I wish to begin by acknowledging the leadership of Germany and the personal commitment of His Excellency Mr. Heiko Maas, its Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, for convening this open debate.

I am proud to join two of the heroes of our common cause, Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege, recipients of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, who give voice to the survivors of this heinous crime. Their award is a triumph of all survivors. Allow me also to thank Ms. Inas Miloud for being here to amplify the voices of indigenous women affected by sexual violence in conflict, as well as Ms. Amal Clooney for her presence among us today.

In the 10 years since the establishment of this mandate by the Security Council, a crime that has often been called “history’s greatest silence” has seized the consciousness of the international community and global action has escalated in an unprecedented way.

The Council has played a critical role by recognizing that the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism constitutes a fundamental threat to international peace and security and that it requires a focused and strategic security and justice response to prevent such crimes, as well as comprehensive services for survivors.

Although stigma and other social barriers contribute to chronic underreporting of sexual violence, we now understand much more about its many forms, drivers and impacts, and about the devastating physical, psychological and social burdens survivors face. In the past decade, the prevention of sexual violence has been incorporated into peace agreements and ceasefire verification frameworks, and Governments and regional organizations have signed joint communiqués and frameworks of cooperation with the United Nations as a basis for joint action. Technical assistance has been provided to national security and justice sector actors to strengthen accountability. United Nations peacekeepers are receiving more consistent training to improve operational readiness to prevent sexual violence in conflict.

Still, after a decade of concerted attention and action, the reality that we must face is that the implementation of resolutions, policies, agreements and commitments remains slow and that criminal accountability for these crimes remains elusive. We have not yet improved the situation on the ground in a sustained or meaningful way. Wars are still being fought on and over the bodies of women and girls. Sexual violence, in its destruction of the individual and the pervasive way it undermines the prospects for peace and development, casts a long shadow over humankind. It is used precisely because it is such an effective means of targeting individuals and devastating entire communities. Sexual violence fuels conflict and severely impacts the prospects for lasting peace. Victims are often targeted on the basis of their actual or perceived ethnic, religious, political or clan affiliation.

When I visited South Sudan last year, I was horrified by the sheer brutality of the sexual violence, perpetrated along ethnic lines against women and girls, even children as young as 4 years old. I met with communities that had arrived only days before in the protection of civilians site in Juba, having fled attacks in Western Equatoria. They were utterly shell-shocked as they described the reign of terror and the

scale and brutal methods used, including gang rape and abductions for sexual slavery.

Sexual violence persists as part of the broader strategy to displace communities, expel an undesirable group or seize contested land or resources. It continues to function as both a driver and a result of forced displacement. In Cox's Bazar, in Bangladesh, I met with Rohingya women and girls who described a pattern of widespread atrocities, including gang rape, committed as part of military clearance operations in northern Rakhine state, in Myanmar. In Libya, we have seen that new or exacerbated vulnerabilities can develop in the course of migration, giving rise to rape, trafficking and sexual exploitation and abuse among those who, once displaced, find themselves without access to resources or legal status.

The despair wrought by conflict often gives rise to further abuse in the name of protection. Imagine a desperation so raw that parents would marry their daughter off to one stranger to spare her rape by many. In Iraq, I met women abducted by Da'esh — including Yazidi, Turkmen Shia and Christian women — who faced the heart-wrenching choice of leaving their children born of conflict-related sexual violence behind in order to gain acceptance back into their communities, or else not returning home at all because they could not bear to abandon their children. Such children may number in the thousands after protracted conflicts in Bosnia, Colombia, Syria, Iraq, the Horn of Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and West Africa. Their marginalization and lack of legal status represent a global peace and security concern, as they are especially vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by armed groups.

In Maiduguri, Nigeria, I met with women and girls who had escaped from Boko Haram. Sitting in a room with dozens of them, I counted so many babies in their arms. I was shocked when they told me that they were better off with their Boko Haram captors because they had gone from being abducted and raped by one man to being subjected daily to sexual violence in the camps and having to sell their bodies to feed their children.

It is essential that victims of sexual violence by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, Da'esh or Al-Shabaab be able to return in dignity and that services be provided for them, rather than being treated as affiliates or intelligence assets. This is all the more critical when we consider how such groups are using

sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism and a means of advancing political, military and economic objectives. They have used sexual slavery and forced marriage as part of the system of punishment and reward through which they consolidate power and build a world order cast in their own image and beliefs.

Everywhere I have travelled, I have seen that survivors are not a homogeneous group — they require tailor-made services and interventions. That includes women who are disproportionately affected in every conflict zone; children who are increasingly targeted as a way to destroy the future of communities; men and boys who often endure sexual violence in the context of detention and interrogation; women's human rights defenders and journalists who report sexual violence; and members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities that have been targeted on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The urgency of ensuring comprehensive health services for all survivors, including sexual and reproductive health, as well as psychosocial and legal support, could not be more acute. That is at the heart of the survivor-centred approach that the Secretary-General articulates in his recommendations and is the central pillar of the strategic priorities that I have established since taking Office.

Yet, if we are ever to prevent those crimes from occurring in the first place, we must confront the unacceptable reality that it is still largely "cost-free" to rape a woman, child or man in armed conflicts around the world. To turn the tide, we must increase the cost and consequences for those who commit, command or condone sexual violence in conflict. We must convert a centuries-old culture of impunity into a culture of accountability. Therefore, we must prioritize deterrence and prevention through justice and accountability.

One of the critical challenges going forward will be how to ensure compliance with international law and the resolutions of the Security Council on the part of parties to conflict who are listed year after year by the Secretary-General. Of the 49 parties listed this year, 36 non-State actors have made no commitment to preventing sexual violence and most of them have now been listed for six years or more. If those parties perceive that their actions are subject to neither scrutiny nor consequences, they will have no incentive to cease violations. I urge the Security Council to consider

additional targeted measures that may be undertaken to apply pressure on those parties.

At the same time, an approach that places survivors at the centre of all our actions requires a holistic concept of justice and accountability, ensuring that survivors receive the livelihood support that they require to rebuild their lives and the reparations that are the obligations of States under international law. Therefore, I wish to emphasize the recommendation of the Secretary-General for Member States to give due consideration to the establishment of a survivor's fund.

Finally, we must recognize that civil society organizations in situations of conflict all around the world continue to be the most important protection actors on the frontlines. It is imperative that we support a broad range of such civil society actors as central to our overall prevention strategies.

I wish to express my appreciation to the members of the Security Council for their serious deliberation of the platform of recommendations of the Secretary-General. The draft resolution put forward by Germany on that basis would represent a significant step forward in terms of strengthening justice and accountability and adopting a survivor-centred approach in all our interventions.

The acute vulnerability of so many women, children and men to sexual violence in conflict situations around the world must now crystalize our resolve into clear action to prevent such crimes. It is essential that we translate promises into practice and resolutions into solutions. It is time to bring such crimes and those who commit them into the spotlight of international scrutiny and to send a clear message that the world will not tolerate the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism.

The President: I thank Ms. Patten for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Dr. Mukwege.

Dr. Mukwege (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Sir, for inviting me to take the floor during this open debate on sexual violence in conflict.

Allow me first of all to share with the Security Council a recollection engraved in my memory following my first statement to the Council more than 10 years ago. A diplomat from a permanent member State had asked, "Why are we talking about this subject here?" That memory reminds us that we have come a

long way in addressing this subject, which is understood to affect our common conscience and humanity and is intimately linked to international peace and security.

I welcome the Security Council's willingness to continue to place the item "Women and peace and security" at the centre of the international community's attention and on its agenda. Since the adoption of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2009), the link between sexual violence and international peace and security has been clearly established and rape as a strategy of war has been fully recognized as a war crime, a crime against humanity and even as a constituent act of the crime of genocide. That is a remarkable step forward, because before a problem can be addressed it must first of all be recognized. Thanks to those legal developments, no political or military leader today can ignore or neglect the fact that it is contrary to international law to use rape and sexual violence as a weapon of domination and terror.

We support all initiatives aimed at establishing a red line against those barbaric acts of which we have been first-hand witnesses for too long, and we hope to see the United Nations and individual States adopting sanctions against the perpetrators and instigators of sexual violence in armed conflict. We believe that local civil society organizations must be fully involved in early warning and rapid response mechanisms and in the collection of data on sexual crimes that would be channelled to centres for monitoring sexual violence established at the local, national, regional and global levels, which would relay them as soon as possible to the review mechanisms of the United Nations sanctions committees.

In Panzi, we have developed a model of holistic care that includes medical, psychological, socio-economic and legal assistance. I take this opportunity to remind the Council that such care for victims must be considered as a human right to rehabilitation, in accordance with resolution 2106 (2013). Our experience shows us that the healing process for survivors is only complete when justice is done. That is why we fully support the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/280) and the work of his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Similarly, we welcome the initiative taken by Germany to introduce a new resolution, as it places particular emphasis on the need for recognition of the status of children born of rape and a comprehensive

survivor-centred approach, as well as the need to apply sanctions, bring justice, demand accountability and provide reparations.

We encourage all efforts to combat impunity at both the national and international levels, as well as the use of special tribunals, which we hope to see in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in every country in a similar situation. We will also continue to advocate for the implementation of transitional justice tools. In countries striving to emerge from violence and dictatorships, security institutions and forces must be cleaned up, and victims have a right not just to quality care but to truth and justice. Reparations do not just complete the process of healing and reintegrating victims, they enable society to recognize the pain that has been inflicted, combat stigma, discrimination and gender inequality, and prevent crimes of sexual violence from recurring.

We hope that the international community will commit to establishing a fund to address the needs of survivors and fill the current gaps in the legal system at the national and international levels. Such a mechanism would include funding to provide reparation programmes and projects in countries that either ignore their responsibilities or need support in fulfilling them. There can be no lasting peace without justice or as long as States fail to listen to women victims with dignity or involve them fully in peacebuilding and social reconstruction.

Everywhere I go in the world, the words of survivors—such as Nadia Murad, my fellow Nobel Peace Prize laureate—are being heard, and their testimonies are living proof. We cannot remain indifferent to their cries. At the same time, the normative framework for combating sexual violence has been steadily improving for 20 years. The evidence is there. The documentation exists. What is the human community waiting for to see justice done for the victims? We urge the decision makers and officials here today to adopt draft resolution S/2019/328 and thereby demonstrate the courage and political will needed to bridge the current gap between the law and actual practice and contribute to building a better world free of sexual violence in times of conflict.

The President: I thank Dr. Mukwege for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Murad.

Ms. Murad (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, the Government of Germany and you, Mr. President, its Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as the members of the Council, for giving me the opportunity to participate in this important open debate on the crimes of sexual violence committed against women all over the world, which have become a dangerous problem that requires all of us to respond and find solutions to. I am happy that today the Council has decided to discuss the issue, which concerns us all.

When we speak about systematic sexual violence crimes in modern times, we cannot fail to discuss what Da'esh did to Yezidi women in Iraq and Syria, enslaving thousands of Yezidi women and girls in front of local and international communities while no one intervened to stop them. The genocide against Yezidis is still ongoing, and the social fabric of an entire community has been torn to shreds. Da'esh has crushed the hopes and aspirations of entire generations and has prevented us from practicing our customs and traditions. It has forced the people who survived the genocide to live in camps without the most basic means of subsistence. There are dozens of mass graves across our entire region. Yezidi women were captured and sold as slaves and used as a weapon against our community.

Having been unable—or to be more accurate, having failed to protect women and children from sexual slavery and a small minority population from genocide—we, as an international community and as human beings, should take on the responsibility of rescuing and freeing those who have been missing since 2014 and are still in captivity. We have repeatedly demanded that the international community, States and Governments establish a working group to save Yezidi women and children, but to no avail. Our appeals fell on deaf ears. The result has been our collective failure. We know very well that these women have been subjected to sexual violence and have been bought and sold by Da'esh in Iraq and Syria. What is stopping us from saving them? Thousands of victims and survivors are living today in deplorable conditions in displacement camps, traumatized and suffering from the sexual violence that was inflicted on them. What I want to say is that while there are some steps that we can take to prevent crimes of sexual violence, when we do not prevent them we must shoulder our responsibility to act by providing every possible support to those who have faced sexual violence.

My Yazidi women colleagues who were subjected to sexual violence at the hands of Da'esh broke the barrier of silence, stigma and fear and told their stories openly, in the hope that this would bring them justice and support and encourage the international community to put an end to such crimes. However, so far not a single person has been tried for sexual enslavement crimes against Yazidi women, and more than 350,000 Yazidis are still displaced in camps. That is nearly 80 per cent of Iraq's Yazidi population. Almost five years after the genocide of my people occurred in front of the international community, no serious steps have been taken to save those who are left. We make statements at the United Nations, but there have been no practical measures, such as reconstructing our regions, bringing perpetrators to justice or returning victims and displaced persons to their homes. We need serious action on the ground, not slogans.

We were hoping that our testimonies would bring members of Da'esh to justice. But thousands of them are still free today and thousands more have been detained but not tried. What we are demanding today is that the perpetrators of genocide and those who used Yazidi women as a weapon of war be brought to justice. They must be brought before a specialized international tribunal and prosecuted for perpetrating genocide and crimes of sexual violence against women and children. That would send a message to others and help to prevent similar crimes in future.

Lastly, the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2379 (2017), establishing an investigative team to investigate crimes committed by Da'esh, support accountability and achieve justice for the victims, was a step in the right direction, even if it came late. We hope that the Council will continue to support Mr. Karim Khan and the United Nations Investigative Team for the Promotion of Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq as they continue to collect evidence. It is also the duty of the Council and the international community to draft a resolution that guarantees full support for the victims of sexual violence, including on the material, psychological and health fronts.

The President: I thank Ms. Murad for her statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Clooney.

Ms. Clooney: I would like to thank the German Government for inviting me to address the Security Council today on the topic of accountability for sexual

violence in conflict. It is an honour to be included among such a distinguished panel of speakers.

In preparing to deliver these remarks alongside Ms. Nadia Murad — my client, friend and somebody I greatly admire — I thought back to a conversation we had when we first met. Nadia told me of her suffering at the hands of 12 different men of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) who enslaved and brutalized her. She recounted the murder of her mother and brothers. She showed me threatening messages that she had received from ISIS on her phone. And as she did that, it occurred to me that she never expressed fear for her life or safety. Instead, that day and ever since, she has spoken of only one fear — that when this is all over, the ISIS men will just shave off their beards and go back to their normal lives and that there will be no justice.

I am legal counsel to Nadia and other Yazidi women and girls who were kidnapped, bought, sold, enslaved and raped by ISIS, and my brief is the pursuit of justice. But it was clear from an early stage that this was going to be a challenge. The world's Powers were focused on a military solution and nobody wished to speak about justice. So we fixed on one imperative — we could not allow the evidence to disappear. Ms. Murad and I therefore came here to the United Nations and we asked the Security Council for help. We asked that it send a team of investigators to Iraq to gather evidence of ISIS crimes so that, one day, trials would be possible and justice would be within reach.

After many months of advocacy, with strong leadership from the United Kingdom and support from Iraq and the United States, Nadia and I sat together in this Chamber (see S/PV.8052) and watched 15 hands go up in favour of adopting resolution 2379 (2017). We welcomed the appointment of an eminent lawyer, Mr. Karim Khan, to lead the Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), and we celebrated the moment four weeks ago when the Team, working alongside the Iraqi authorities, began to exhume mass graves and identify the victims' remains. That first step in any criminal inquiry was a cathartic moment for many Yazidi families, and we are encouraged to hear that the investigation in Iraq is now fully under way.

We have also seen milestones in national courts around the world. In the United States, I represent Yazidi women and girls who were held in the house of an ISIS member named Umm Sayyaf, along with one

of the few non-Yazidi victims of ISIS's sexual violence that we know of, an American hostage named Kayla Mueller, who was held in brutal conditions for over 18 months and raped repeatedly by the head of ISIS, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. Umm Sayyaf showed no solidarity with her fellow females. She locked them in a room, instigated their beatings and put makeup on them to prepare them for rape. I am requesting her transfer to the United States to face justice for those crimes.

In France, I represent Yazidi victims in a case against Lafarge, a company that made multi-million dollar payments to ISIS and is the first multinational to be charged with complicity in crimes against humanity committed by the group.

In Germany, I represent a Yazidi victim in a case in which the German Supreme Court confirmed that the charges against an ISIS commander responsible for sexual slavery amount to genocide, which is the first judicial recognition of that fact anywhere in the world.

Two weeks ago, I was in Munich, where the first trial against an ISIS member for international crimes committed against a Yazidi victim has now begun. In that case, I represent the mother of a 5-year-old Yazidi child who was enslaved, chained outdoors to a window and left to slowly die of thirst in the scorching heat. The ISIS member who allowed it to happen now faces charges of murder as a war crime.

Those are important milestones, and I would like to convey special thanks to the German prosecutors I have worked closely with over the past few years for their determination and professionalism in bringing those cases to trial. But let me be very clear. That does not come close to the level of justice the survivors wish for or the scale of the international response that they deserve.

Let us remember that the crimes committed by ISIS against women and girls are unlike anything we have witnessed in modern times. ISIS controlled territory the size of the United Kingdom and ruled over 8 million people. More than 40,000 foreign fighters from 110 countries are estimated to have joined ISIS's ranks in Iraq and Syria. But the question of bringing them to justice has barely raised a whisper, and yet, if we do not act now, it will be too late. Thousands of perpetrators, including some of the most high-ranking, are held by coalition-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in Syria. Those Forces say that they "lack logistical support to hold them for a long time", and President Trump has

warned that if Europe does not find a way to put foreign fighters on trial, the United States will be "forced to release them".

Thousands more ISIS members are detained in Iraq, but there, trials that the United Nations says are lacking due process proceed on a single terrorism charge without witnesses and move swiftly to executions. None of those trials stand as a measure of justice for Yazidis. They do not provide victims an opportunity to look their abusers in the eye and tell the world what ISIS has done. The charges do not include sexual violence, and crimes like genocide are not even on the books.

That has to change, and there is now a unique opportunity for international accountability, because thousands of ISIS militants are in custody, a United Nations team is collecting evidence and survivors are waiting to testify, but also because people in the region are calling for international trials. In Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces has called for "a special international tribunal to prosecute foreign fighters", and in Iraq, the Kurdish regional Government has made a similar plea.

Meanwhile, the Council has itself made clear that the genocide pursued by ISIS through murder and rape represents a threat to international peace and security, and when it reached a similar conclusion about such crimes in Rwanda and Bosnia, it established tribunals to put the perpetrators on trial. But if Al-Baghdadi is arrested today, where will he go? Here are four options for the Council to consider.

First, the Council can refer the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC), as many Yazidi survivors have called for. Unfortunately, that seems increasingly unlikely. The United States Government has recently said, through its National Security Adviser John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, that the ICC is "dead to us" and that those who support certain ICC investigations can be denied entry to the United States, have their assets frozen and may even face arrest.

A similarly devastating blow to the ICC was delivered by another permanent member of the Council. A senior Russian official told this Chamber last month that Russia would never refer another situation to the ICC, nor would it ever "help our colleagues in the Security Council to create any more such tribunals". He added, for good measure, that maybe the whole experiment with international justice should never even have been started at all. Survivors of sexual violence

can only hope that the Council will find a way through that impasse, but there are other ways that justice can be served.

The second option is that like-minded States that believe in justice could set up a court by a treaty. That could be done by States that are members of the Global Coalition against Da'esh, many of which are represented here today. After all, if 79 States can come together to fight ISIS on the battlefield, why can they not establish a court, either in The Hague or somewhere in the region? The Global Coalition has stated that its mission is to “ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS”, but that is not possible without justice. As members of the Coalition have themselves acknowledged, a military defeat is not on its own an enduring one, because until we kill the idea behind ISIS, it will simply regroup under a new umbrella.

Thirdly, if the Council does not act and the Global Coalition does not act, the European Union (EU) can. The EU recently helped to establish a special court in The Hague to deal with international crimes committed in Kosovo. That court has the support of all EU countries, as well as the United States, Canada, Norway, Turkey and Switzerland, and its cases are handled by international prosecutors and judges. With Iraqi support, the EU and like-minded States could do the same for ISIS crimes, or the EU could expand the mandate of the European Public Prosecutor's Office to cover international crimes and set up a new EU court with jurisdiction over them.

Fourthly, Iraq could enter into a treaty with the United Nations to set up a hybrid court, as was done for Sierra Leone and Cambodia, to prosecute those responsible for international crimes.

None of those solutions comes without complication or cost and none of them would replace the need to have credible trials in national courts alongside any international ones. But the draft resolution the Council is considering today notes the prevalence of sexual violence in wars all over the world and the Council's profound concern about the slow progress in eliminating sexual violence in conflict. I agree that we are facing an epidemic of sexual violence and I believe that justice is the antidote.

It is therefore my respectful submission to the Council today that, although the draft resolution under consideration would represent a welcome step forward, especially insofar as it strengthens the sanctions regime

for those who commit sexual violence, we must go further. If the Council cannot prevent sexual violence in war, then it must at least punish it. As the parents of Kayla Mueller and other American ISIL hostages have put it, when crimes like these are made public in an open court, victims like them can be heard and begin to heal and we can hope that justice will put an end to such crimes against humanity.

Therefore, instead of abandoning international justice we must stand up for it, because justice is not inevitable — it does not just happen and it does not stand a chance if people in power, including those at this table, do not make it a priority.

After the Second World War, the victorious nations, namely, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and the United States, asked themselves the same question about the Nazis that we are asking now about ISIL—when it comes to war, should we really care about justice? Mr. Anthony Eden, then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, took the view that the guilt of the Nazis was so black that they fell outside any judicial process.

Others thought that show trials or mass executions would be a better response. But the United States, under Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, pushed for trials because, the United States said, it was important to create a record of the Nazi system of terrorism. The American prosecutor who opened the trial said that he did so because “the wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated”.

This is the Council's Nuremberg moment, its chance to stand on the right side of history. The Council owes it to Nadia and to the thousands of women and girls who must watch ISIL members shave off their beards and go back to their normal lives, while they, the victims, never can.

Nadia has been given many honours since she decided to bravely speak out about the horrors she and her people have suffered. She has received titles, awards, words of thanks and promises of assistance. But she would trade her Nobel Peace Prize in a heartbeat for the chance to get what she really wants — the chance to face, in a court of law, those who murdered her mother and her brothers and those who brutally and repeatedly raped her.

It is time for the Council to make justice its priority so that history can record what happened, so that we can stop it happening again and to truly honour those who, like Nadia, have already suffered too much.

The President: I thank Ms. Clooney for her statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Miloud.

Ms. Miloud: I am Inas Miloud. My people are the Amazigh and they are the indigenous inhabitants of Libya. I was born in 1990 and I grew up in Yafran, a small Amazigh town in the Nafusa mountains about 100 miles from Tripoli.

Since the 2011 revolution, I have been working with indigenous women and girls affected by sexual and gender-based violence, as well as displaced and migrant communities in Libya. Today I represent not only my people, the Amazigh, but all women in Libya. I speak in my capacity as the Chairperson of the Tamazight Women's Movement, an organization that undertakes research and advocacy on indigenous issues in Libya from an intersectional feminist perspective. I also speak today on behalf of the non-governmental organization Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Last week, the United Nations-supported national peace conference that was meant to put Libya on the road to democracy and elections had to be postponed. As noted by Mr. Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, people cannot be asked to take part in a conference while they are exposed to gunfire and air strikes.

Weeks into General Khalifa Haftar's military assault on Tripoli, as the number of civilian deaths mounts, thousands flee and the humanitarian crisis deepens, I think about my family — not only the grave threats they currently face but the reality that they have had to live through for decades under the Al-Qaddafi regime. In 2011, we took to the streets to demand our freedom, an end to repression and our right to democracy.

Yet eight years after the United Nations-brokered political agreement, my country remains embroiled in crisis and our hopes for change have been dashed. The renewal of conflict in 2014 brought an increase in sexual violence and threats to women's security, including widespread sexual torture of women and men, particularly internally displaced persons, indigenous

and other minority communities and women human rights defenders.

In 2018, we collected hundreds of stories from Libyans across the country about their experiences of sexual and gender-based violence, which primarily affects women and girls. The majority of testimonies provided by both men and women outline a common pattern of physical violence, rape, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, abductions and domestic violence. Their stories highlight two indisputable facts.

First, rigid patriarchal norms, amplified by the presence of armed groups and the widespread availability of weapons, are the central cause of gender-based violence and lack of security for women.

Secondly, gender-based violence exists in a continuum that extends from times of peace to periods of conflict and from public spaces to private lives.

Despite the United Nations arms embargo, weapons continue to flow into the country unchecked. Due to the widespread availability of weapons in every household, violence often escalates into a deadly outcome. Patriarchal notions of family honour, coupled with fear of retaliation, ensure that domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence are rarely reported. Indigenous women are even further marginalized due to the entrenched discrimination against our communities that has existed for decades.

Hundreds of indigenous women are targets of sexual and gender-based violence simply because they belong to communities such as the Tebu, the Tuareg and my own people, the Amazigh. In 2016, my friend was gang-raped by an armed group on her way from Tripoli to the Nafusa Mountains with her brother. Five armed men stopped her, beat her brother and assaulted her. They told her that Amazigh women deserve to be raped.

I have known many others, both in my personal life and through my work, who have been the victims of gender-based violence and their stories remain shrouded in silence. Chronic underreporting due to stigma, fear of retaliation and a lack of trust in the judicial system fuels impunity for perpetrators on all sides of the conflict.

For many in Libya, internal displacement has become a permanent feature of life. Forty per cent of the 1 million international migrants in Libya are women. Denied basic human necessities such as safe shelter, food and medicine, displaced women and young girls

and boys are especially vulnerable to violence. They are abducted and even raped — often multiple times, by different perpetrators, including by armed groups as well as State actors. Sexual and gender-based violence is perpetrated in ways that affect both women and men.

Men and boys are targeted, particularly in Libyan detention centres and prisons. In Libyan detention centres, a commonly reported torture technique involves forcing men to stand in a circle to watch the rape and sometimes murder of women. Anyone who moves or speaks out is beaten or killed. In most cases, there are no services to meet the needs of female survivors, let alone male survivors.

A feature of the violence targeting men and boys — and a reason for its stigmatization — is the deeply entrenched assumptions about male invulnerability. Challenging harmful gender norms and attitudes in terms of both masculinity and femininity is therefore essential for addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and militarization.

Like many Libyans, the revolution changed my life. Through the revolution, I learned what it means to be an activist and why that matters, not only for women or my own people, the Tamazight, who have been denied social, cultural and political rights for decades, but for all Libyans.

The work of women human rights defenders remains essential for both protecting basic human rights and peace and security in Libya, on the one hand, and providing such life-saving services as food, medical care and free counselling to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, on the other hand. However, attacks against them are still on the rise: more than 10 cases have been documented since 2017. Sexual and gender-based violence is systematically used to intimidate and silence women activists and political figures. Reprisals for our activism and the criminalization of our work has led to severe restrictions on the freedom of movement, assembly and speech. Numerous women's organizations have simply stopped working due to such harassment and threats.

Enabling women's full participation in public life as activists, politicians or ordinary citizens is an essential step forward, challenging deeply held beliefs about the roles of men and women. Participation is therefore a necessary condition for adequately addressing sexual and gender-based violence.

Critically, the peace process led by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya has largely excluded Libyan women and indigenous groups. As a result, the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement does not address many crucial issues, such as gender equality, sexual and gender-based violence, displacement, restrictions on freedom of movement, particularly of young women, and fear of reprisals for women's rights activism.

When Secretary-General António Guterres visited Libya earlier this month, many meetings took place behind closed doors, so there was no clear signal that civil society was invited to participate. This reflects a broader pattern of disengagement between ordinary Libyans and the United Nations-led peace process. Peace cannot be built without building trust with our communities and having meaningful consultation with civil society.

Last week, my cousin's entire family was killed when their house was destroyed during the recent shelling in Tripoli. Theirs is just one example of the toll this conflict has taken on civilian lives. As bombs rain down on Tripoli and clashes continue in Alzizia and Zuwaya, ordinary Libyans now look to the Security Council to speak in a unified voice and take swift action to end the current crisis and put Libya on the path to peace.

We call on the Security Council to demand a ceasefire and ensure that civilians are protected from attacks. We welcome recent efforts to this end and urge all Council members to ensure international humanitarian law is upheld. The Council must stop the sale of weapons that are being used to perpetuate the violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. All Member States must uphold international law, including the Arms Trade Treaty and enforce the United Nations embargo on all weapons sales to Libya.

The Council must recognize the gendered impact of arms. Security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are urgently needed. The Council must investigate all allegations of sexual violence promptly, impartially and fully. It must support survivors. A survivor-centred approach means both ensuring survivors' rights and addressing their needs, including, as a priority, access to life-saving interventions and post-rape medical care, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, emergency contraception, the option of safe abortion services, and HIV prevention and treatment.

The Council must protect the human rights of refugees and migrants in accordance with international law. It must publicly condemn attacks and threats against human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, and develop specific protection measures in consultation with them in order to address the violence they face due to their work.

The Council must ensure that any peace agreements are gender-sensitive and protect and respect the human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the Constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary. It must meaningfully include women, indigenous peoples and youth and ensure that they are able to substantively influence all phases of the upcoming National Conference and elections. They must be included as decision makers — not only as observers.

In conclusion, as we approach the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), I urge the Security Council to see the current situation in Libya as an important test of its credibility as the international community and of what progress on the women and peace and security agenda really means for women, survivors and activists, and their communities, all of whom are suffering through conflict.

Amina Megheirbi, a fellow Libyan woman human rights defender from Benghazi, sat in this very chair and delivered a statement at an open debate on this topic in February 2012 (see S/PV.6722). The fact that today I am delivering the same messages to the Council as she did then should be a stark reminder that the Council's efforts to bring peace to Libya have not been enough.

The Al-Qadhafi regime not only repressed my people, the Amazigh, our culture and a way of life, but criminalized speaking the Tamazight language in public and forbade it being taught in schools. Growing up speaking a banned language meant learning how to fight for my own freedom of speech from a very young age. It is therefore no small achievement that I address the Security Council today. Let these efforts not be in vain.

The President: I thank Ms. Miloud for her briefing, and I thank all the briefers for their impressive statements, which clearly underline why we are meeting here today. The Security Council needs to stand with the survivors.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

“There is nothing I can do to forget all this.” The woman who uttered these words is sitting at this table: Ms. Nadia Murad. All of us in this Chamber know her story; all of us know what this sentence is about.

When we talk about sexual violence in conflict, we are talking about her story. But we are also talking about thousands of other stories that have never been told to the world, stories hauntingly similar to Ms. Murad's story, stories that could be told by many Rohingya women in Myanmar or by girls in Syria, where sexual violence is used as a weapon of war.

Almost 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), that is the grim reality of almost all conflict. Resolution 1325 (2000) was a milestone, but reality shows that its implementation is lagging behind — we must do more. We must take three important steps forward.

First, we must strengthen accountability. We must strengthen the channels through which information on non-compliance reaches the Security Council and its sanctions committees. We want to ensure that sexual violence has consequences, including through targeted sanctions. Of course, we also need to ensure that crimes are prosecuted, including at the national level. After all, the failure to bring perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict to justice fosters a deadly culture of impunity.

In Germany, the Prosecutor General began in 2014 to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham in Iraq and Syria. Our legal system is working closely on that with the relevant United Nations Special Envoy and others should follow that example.

Secondly, we must place the victims — the survivors of sexual violence — at the heart of our work. That is why draft resolution S/2019/328, which we have proposed, calls on all States Members of the United Nations to support such survivors by providing better access to justice, medical and psychological services, as well as reintegration support, in other words by enabling them to live their lives with dignity. Only when we help victims to achieve justice, when we hear their voices and let them testify, are we giving survivors the chance to stop being victims.

Thirdly, we must focus on those who are not yet getting enough attention, such as the boys and men

who have experienced sexual violence and the mothers who give birth as a result of wartime rape and their children. Those who have survived sexual violence often remain victims long after the crimes have been committed. They are stigmatized and cast out — and that is horrible.

Yet the horror does not stop there. Sexual violence not only affects the survivors but it also destroys the society they live in. That makes the path to peace all the more difficult. If you destroy women, you destroy the family and eventually the entire village. That is how Dr. Mukwege, who is also in the Chamber today, once put it.

Dr. Mukwege saved the lives of tens of thousands of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, like Nadia Murad. They share a bond in their inspiring fight for justice. We have to do all we can to help them in that fight — not only politically, through the draft resolution that Germany is proposing, but also financially. That is why we have earmarked €400,000 that we will use to support their work and the survivors of sexual violence in conflict.

There is nothing I can do to forget all this. Nadia Murad's statement sent a chill down our spine. It sends a clear and powerful message not to forget and to open our eyes and use all the means we have to fight to ensure her story is not repeated.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Lord Ahmad (United Kingdom): Allow me first to extend my heartfelt thanks to Germany and to you, Mr. President, in particular for your personal efforts in prioritizing discussion on this important issue before us today — conflict-related sexual violence — and for gathering such knowledgeable briefers.

I am sure I speak for everyone in this Chamber and beyond, when I say that our biggest thanks go to our briefers, in particular to those courageous survivors of sexual violence in conflict. Once again, we have heard compelling testimony that, despite the considerable momentum that has been built on this very issue since the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013) and others, as well as the launch of the United Kingdom-

led Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative over seven years ago, there is still so much more to do. Draft resolution S/2019/328, which is before us today, is a positive contribution to much-needed efforts to move the agenda forward.

The United Kingdom is supporting the draft resolution, which was proposed by Germany, because time after time in this very Chamber we have heard shocking reports of conflict-related sexual violence, like those we heard today. I am sure I speak for everyone in this Chamber when I pay tribute to the likes of Nadia Murad and Inas Miloud for their brave courage and testimony, which they have presented once again today.

The impact of crimes of sexual violence on countries, survivors, communities and families is very clear and it is our responsibility, as the Security Council, to respond to that challenge. The proposed draft resolution builds on previous resolutions in developing an integrated, effective and international approach to tackling such grave crimes. There are three elements of the draft resolution that I wish to focus on in my statement.

First, the proposed draft resolution rightly recognizes the importance of focusing on survivors' needs through a survivor-centred approach, a point again articulated by the Secretary-General in his contribution today. We believe that such an approach is key to all policies and programmes that aim to meet the needs of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and to avoid putting them at risk of further harm.

Secondly, the proposed draft resolution acknowledges that conflict-related sexual violence has a disproportionate impact on women and girls. It encourages support for children born of sexual violence and recognizes that sexual violence also affects men and boys. The United Kingdom believes that survivor services should cater to all survivors without exception and welcomes the efforts made in the draft resolution to promote that very approach.

Thirdly, the draft resolution emphasizes the role that civil society plays in efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence, including by tackling stigma, as well as its central role in the implementation of a broader women and peace and security agenda.

However, the United Kingdom believes that more needs to be done. We regret that the language on services for survivors of sexual violence, recognizing the acute

need for those services to include comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care, including safe termination of pregnancies, did not meet with the support of all the Council members. It is important nonetheless that we maintain our consistent efforts in that respect and the progress that we have made on that issue, including through previous Council resolutions, most notably resolution 2106 (2013).

Over the past several years, the United Kingdom has spent more than £46 million on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence around the world, and I want to assure the Council that as our Prime Minister's special representative on this very issue, it is a personal priority for me. Our international consultations have informed our efforts to put survivors at the centre of our approach, not only in how we respond to incidents that have already occurred but also, importantly, and as we heard from our briefers today, in how we prevent them from happening again. We have been pleased to work with like-minded partners, and I would particularly like to pay tribute to the close cooperation we have enjoyed with Special Representative Patten and her Office, as well as our joint visits, such as the one we made not so long ago to Iraq.

Accountability is key both to response and prevention — first, because achieving justice is a vital step in helping survivors to repair and rebuild their lives, as we have also heard again today, and secondly, because ending impunity, as we heard from Amal Clooney, is an essential deterrent to future violence of this nature. That is why the United Kingdom is committed to strengthening justice for survivors and holding perpetrators to account. That means not only ensuring that international standards and best practices for gathering evidence are upheld so that convictions can be secured, but also that survivors are not traumatized all over again. That is why we should tackle both conscious and unconscious bias within criminal justice systems and build the capacity of judges and prosecutors to gain a better understanding of conflict-related sexual violence and of the need to act, which is a priority, as has been illustrated by the testimonies we have heard today from Nadia Murad. We owe it to the survivors.

That is why the United Kingdom is working with the Institute for International Criminal Investigations and with Nadia's Initiative to develop the Murad Code, an ethical code of conduct that will ensure that survivors

give informed consent regarding evidence-gathering and are referred safely and confidentially to support services. We want to see the Code incorporated into all donor funding requirements, and we hope that all members will sign up when we launch it formally at our Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative international conference, to be held in London in November. However, we should also recognize that for some survivors, achieving justice does not necessarily mean going through a formal court system, which is why we support the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation and Nadia's Initiative in developing community-focused redress for survivors. The United Kingdom recently funded a pilot project in that regard in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We also support Dr. Mukwege's plea for more holistic support for survivors. We therefore endorse the call to Council members to provide more funding for the survivor advocacy networks, health-care professionals and psychosocial services that offer such support and that are making a real difference in the lives of survivors on the ground. I was going to end my statement today with a question for the briefers on how we, the international community, can do more to ensure that survivors of sexual violence have access to such holistic support. But through their testimonies we have heard many of the answers today. I would particularly like to respond to the testimonies we heard from the survivors and from Amal Clooney by saying that in thanking them for providing their insights today, I want to assure them that we will reflect on the contributions they have made. In doing so, I feel proud of the United Kingdom's contribution, above all in penning and securing unanimous support for resolution 2379 (2017), which ensured that we held the members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) who perpetrated those crimes to account.

We stand with the Government of Iraq, the survivors, Nadia Murad and others such as Amal Clooney who represent them. We totally support the work and efforts on the ground in Iraq of Karim Khan, Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team for the Promotion of Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq. We look forward to their responses and their continued insights and expertise and, most importantly, to the testimonies of survivors. We should all remain focused on that key priority. It should be the basis of international action in preventing sexual violence in conflict. Yes, as we have

heard today, words are important, but words alone do not provide justice and accountability for survivors. It is time to act, and we must do just that.

Mr. Nguema Ndong (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to welcome your presence in the Chamber, Mr. President, and that of the other Ministers here today.

We associate ourselves with the statement to be delivered later by the observer of the African Union.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea acknowledges the release of the Secretary-General's latest annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2019/280) with concern. The report is the reason we have to thank Germany and France for their initiative in convening this important open debate focused on promoting measures for preventing and ending this evil. We also want to extend a warm welcome to Dr. Mukwege, Ms. Murad, Ms. Clooney and Ms. Miloud, and to thank them for their informative briefings.

Equatorial Guinea firmly condemns the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, terror or subjection. Sexual violence in conflict is increasingly being used as a weapon of war, and as one of the most horrific expressions of human cruelty it deserves to be utterly repudiated. We therefore commend Germany on its initiative and its commitment to strengthening a holistic process that will help us make progress on preventing and eliminating conflict-related sexual violence and improving the related United Nations infrastructure. We believe that this initiative is vital to advancing that crucial agenda and taking action to mark the tenth anniversary of the establishment by resolution 1888 (2009) of the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict.

Equatorial Guinea's fundamental law recognizes gender equality and actively promotes women's participation in every sector. We understand and believe in the critical role that a gender perspective and women's participation can play at every level in implementing plans for peace, security and sustainable development. From that point of view, we believe firmly that in order to support States' strategies and efforts to combat sexual violence more effectively, the international community must commit to working with States on approaches that support and sustain women and children, displaced persons and refugees, minorities and other vulnerable groups far beyond a conflict's

actual duration. In regard to the issue of migrants and displaced persons, the President of Equatorial Guinea has been entrusted by the African Union with the role of African Leader for Refugees and Displaced Persons in Africa. Equatorial Guinea will work to give its very best in collaborating on the issue and contributing to the quest for lasting solutions to this human tragedy.

As the Secretary-General says on page 1 of his report,

"Preventing sexual violence requires the advancement of substantive gender equality before, during and after conflict, including by ensuring women's full and effective participation of women in political, economic and social life and ensuring accessible and responsive justice and security institutions."

The strengthened cooperation between the Security Council and the African Union's African Peace and Security Architecture, which also reinforces subregional initiatives for implementing the Council's resolutions in order to advance the agenda for women and peace and security, among other things, is an example of the type of alliances to which we should continue to give more predictable support.

In emphasizing that the most effective way to combat the crime of conflict-related sexual violence is the prevention of conflict itself, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea calls on the parties involved in conflict to commit themselves to ensuring the protection of civilians, in accordance with international law, while always bearing in mind the primary responsibility of States in that regard by respecting State sovereignty and supporting their efforts in implementation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

As the testimonies of the speakers show, despite the achievements, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea remains concerned about the slow progress in preventing and eliminating conflict-related sexual violence. In that regard, we support the preventive approach advocated by the Secretary-General in his report, as well as his recommendations to address gender inequality, in times of war and peace, as the main root cause of sexual violence in armed conflict.

The growing complexity of armed conflicts has resulted in sexual violence being increasingly used as a tactic of war and a source of income for parties involved in conflict, such as groups of violent extremists,

terrorists or organized crime in those territories or neighbouring countries. Uneven development and the displacement, within and between countries, of people fleeing conflict further complicate the situation.

In that context, despite the progress made by States, including with the support of the United Nations, in efforts to advance towards and to eliminate impunity for such crimes, protecting all victims and their families and ensuring accountability remain significant challenges. In that regard, ending impunity for crimes of sexual violence is an important objective of the Council.

As has already been recommended on other occasions, we must ensure that sexual violence is a designation criteria in the relevant sanctions regimes. At the same time, the international community should support countries that request assistance in strengthening the capacity of their legal and social protection institutions and their cooperation with other social sectors, thereby ensuring that their gains can be transformed in a sustainable way.

In February, under the presidency of Equatorial Guinea, the Council adopted resolution 2457 (2019) on silencing the guns in Africa by 2020 (see S/PV.8473). The spirit of that resolution is broadly reflected in the issue that we are discussing today, since, as Africa is the continent with the highest incidence of rape in conflict, the effective implementation of resolution 2457 (2019) would implicitly mean the elimination of that horrendous phenomenon in Africa. In order to achieve that goal, the international community's cooperation is essential. That same cooperation is critical to the adoption of the draft resolution on the financing of peacekeeping operations in Africa, which is pending before this Council and which the Republic of Equatorial Guinea hopes will be adopted in the course of this year.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, UN-Women and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict, led by Ms. Patten, to this issue. We support its strategic initiatives, such as the framework of cooperation with the African Union Commission concerning the prevention and response to conflicted-related sexual violence in Africa, among others.

In conclusion, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea will continue to support the various components of the United Nations architecture for combating sexual violence in armed conflict and to promote cooperation among them and the United Nations agencies responsible for counter-terrorism, organized crime, humanitarian response and sustainable development in order to ensure a victim-centred approach to that crime so that they may not only survive but also thrive.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I would like to wish a warm welcome to today's briefers and to thank them for their very important contributions.

Allow me to begin by offering the heartfelt condolences of the United States to the people of Sri Lanka for the Easter Day terrorist attacks that killed nearly 300 people and wounded hundreds of others. The United States condemns those attacks in the strongest terms. We stand with the Sri Lankan people, and we remain ready to provide our assistance to the local authorities as they work to investigate the attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The United States is resolute in recognizing that conflict-related sexual violence is a matter of international peace and security that demands collective action to promote prevention, hold perpetrators accountable and support survivors. None of us can turn our backs on this issue. It requires the engagement of all Member States and of the United Nations to support the efforts of those fighting to protect women, provide accountability and support survivors.

It is for survivors that the United States invests in early warning and response initiatives to prevent sexual violence in conflict. The promise of a future without the sexual violence that often accompanies conflict begins with supporting communities to partner with security and governance institutions to expand the effectiveness of prevention efforts.

It is for survivors that the United States commitment to justice and accountability is at the heart of our response to this issue. As Special Representative Pramila Patten noted, despite widespread reports of sexual violence in conflict, such acts are often not investigated, let alone prosecuted. Fear and stigma prevent survivors from coming forward. Ending impunity would help deter the recurrence of such crimes while ensuring survivors access to the justice they deserve.

I would particularly like to welcome Ms. Nadia Murad, and I commend her for her bravery in the face of unimaginable terror and as a leading advocate for supporting the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (UNITAD). We support accountability for ISIL and other perpetrators of those crimes, and we are working with the Government of Iraq and other partners to help ensure that ISIL is held accountable. As the United States announced last year (see S/PV.8412), we are providing \$2 million to support UNITAD's efforts, which include exhuming a mass grave in Kocho, Ms. Murad's home village.

It is for survivors that we implement and fund unique rapid response programmes for extreme forms of gender-based violence, including the Voices Against Violence fund that directly supports Yazidi women and girls who escaped from ISIL. Ensuring that survivors have access to the resources they need to heal and recover is the first step in breaking the silence and stigma that they experience, changing the norms that enable and exacerbate violence in conflict and securing the justice they so deserve so that they can use their voices as agents of peace, live free from violence and have access to equal opportunities.

Solutions require strategic responses that start with best practices learned on the ground, with actors across the United Nations system, civil society and Member States playing important roles. Our commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security begins with those most affected by war, violence and terrorism. By putting survivors at the heart of our work, we enhance our understanding of the barriers to security and are better positioned to build partnerships with communities that lead to justice and prosperity.

We welcome today's open debate as an opportunity to recognize how we can support survivors in building the solutions that will help to prevent and eradicate sexual violence in conflict. The United States commends the work of the United Nations in that regard and looks forward to continued efforts that explore the entire cycle of conflict and gender-based violence.

The best long-term protection from sexual violence in conflict comes from building societies where women and girls are valued and their human rights are respected. That includes institutionalizing equal protections under the law and access to education and

opportunity, which are essential to enabling women's participation in public life. We must also address the root causes of sexual violence, such as structural inequality and gender discrimination, which drive this crime and result in perpetual cycles of violence and injustice.

In humanitarian and disaster-response efforts, it is essential that we promote safe communities and protect vulnerable populations from all forms of violence. That includes providing services, reducing risks, creating a secure environment and challenging the norms that exacerbate violence and conflict and perpetuate gender inequality.

Finally, we urge the United Nations and Member States to invest in enhanced efforts to update early-warning indicators and the investigation, monitoring and disaggregation of reports on sexual violence in conflict with a view towards informing prevention, mitigation and accountability measures.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, China strongly condemns the series of explosions in Sri Lanka. We convey our deep condolences over the deaths of the victims and our sympathies to the families of the deceased and the injured.

I welcome the presence in New York of Your Excellency, the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, to preside over this open debate. I thank Secretary-General Guterres and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Patten, for their briefings. I also thank the other briefers for their presentations.

Today, we are confronted with a complex and challenging international security landscape, the wide prevalence of armed conflicts old and new, and rampant terrorist activities, leaving women, girls and other vulnerable groups to bear the brunt of sexual violence in armed conflict. China strongly condemns and stands firm against the use of sexual violence as a means of war and any and all acts of sexual violence against women and girls. In that regard, I would like to make the following points.

First, we must prevent or end conflict through peaceful means and root out the breeding grounds for sexual violence in conflict. The Security Council should support the settlement of disputes through political engagement, dialogue and consultation within the parameters of its mandate under the Charter of the

United Nations, play a greater role in such areas as conflict prevention and peacekeeping, and effectively combat terrorism to provide solid safeguards for the protection of women. Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the international community has created a good framework for the women and peace and security agenda. The relevant resolutions of the Council should be properly implemented on the ground.

Secondly, we must fully respect the sovereignty and will of the countries concerned and the measures taken by their Governments in the context of their national realities. Those countries have the primary responsibility for preventing and combatting sexual violence in conflict and protecting their women and children. We should vigorously support capacity-building of the countries concerned, provide targeted assistance, enhance capacity-building in security, social governance and other areas, and effectively safeguard the rights and interests of women in conflict.

Thirdly, we need to scale up the protection of women's rights and interests in the post-conflict reconstruction process. In particular, due regard should be paid to the rights of victims of sexual violence in conflict. The international community should, in a long-term perspective, provide development assistance and technical support for the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries so as to protect women's rights and interests at a fundamental level. The international community should actively help post-conflict countries, ramp up their economic and social development, and ensure that the development dividend is shared by all, including women. Attention should be given to guiding women's organizations and civil society in playing a constructive role to that end.

Fourthly, we must create synergies among the relevant bodies of the United Nations. The Council should fulfil its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, strengthen coordination with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, among others, and conduct cooperation in a way that is consistent with its mandate and expertise. The United Nations should strengthen its cooperation with the relevant regional and subregional organizations to build synergy in combating sexual violence in conflict.

China stands ready, along with the international community, to continue stepping up cooperation to

jointly create a peaceful, secure and stable international environment for the effective protection of the rights and interests of women and girls and for an early end to sexual violence in conflict, making a greater contribution to the further advancement of the cause of women and peace and security .

Mr. Kenes (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): More than a decade ago, the Council recognized that sexual violence is often used as a tactic of war for which there can be no amnesty. It will soon be 10 years since the Council established the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the team of experts and the functions of women's protection advisers. My country wishes to thank all these indispensable actors both for their dedication to the prevention of sexual violence and for their commitment to justice. In adopting resolution 1820 (2008), the Council — including Belgium, which was a member at that time — called unanimously for the immediate and complete cessation of sexual violence and for an end to the impunity of the guilty parties. Today, 10 years later, the collective responsibility to protect civilians from this threat remains ours and unchanged.

Belgium thanks Germany for having organized this important debate under its presidency. My country also thanks this morning's briefers, who have painted a very clear and serious picture. The bodies of women, men and children continue to be used as a battlefield; conflict-related sexual violence continues to wreak havoc on families and entire communities with the aim of displacing populations and creating lasting fear. We must intensify our efforts and further strengthen the tools available to the Council.

While the Council has made great strides, we must pursue our efforts. The testimonies of Dr. Mukwege and Ms. Murad made that clear, as did today's other briefers. The Council is very honoured to welcome them here today. Their exemplary work makes a difference for victims and contributes to awareness and, in so doing, to prevention. Dr Mukwege, in Bukavu, provides rape survivors with emergency medical care, including sexual and reproductive health care. But beyond that, he advises them so that they can cope with horror they have suffered, get back on their feet and, most importantly, survive. The voice of Ms. Murad, herself a survivor whose action echoes the voices of thousands of others, today represents many women, men and children, all with different needs if they are to heal and survive.

One of the key points of the draft resolution before us today is a survivor-centred approach. Belgium particularly welcomes the inclusion of particularly disadvantaged groups, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, who face multiple and cross-gender forms of discrimination. My country welcomes the fact that, for the first time, the Council is talking about children born of rape. We have heard testimony from Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. As in other conflict zones, children born of rape and their mothers risk being ostracized from their communities and even losing their citizenship or official identity.

In that regard, Belgium has urged the Security Council to call on States to provide comprehensive service and care to victims, including sexual and reproductive health care, legal services, psychosocial services and socioeconomic support. For Belgium, that includes freedom of choice and access to abortion without risk for women who have been raped. In the context of sexual violence in conflict, the restoration of victims' sexual and reproductive health is indeed critical and in line with the resolutions adopted by the Security Council in the past, including resolutions 1889 (2009), 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013).

Sexual violence will never be stopped or prevented if we accept impunity. That has come through clearly in this morning's debate. The fight against impunity is a long-term goal of Belgium's foreign policy, including by means of the prevention of new crimes. The perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice. Our country will support the strengthening of States' capacities and is already funding the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

In cases in which States either refuse or are unable to mete out justice, Belgium calls for supporting the work of international mechanisms such as international commissions of inquiry, the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Iraq, and the 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. Documenting the crime in question is a necessary step in bringing justice to

survivors. We believe that the International Criminal Court also plays a key role in that area.

Within the Council, we must continue to strengthen existing mechanisms to combat impunity and step up prevention, such as by means of separate designation criteria for conflict-related sexual violence in connection with relevant Security Council sanctions regimes. While we welcome the holding of this open debate and the adoption of draft resolution S/2019/328, Belgium regrets that a consensus could not be reached to establish a formal working group, which would have made it possible to strengthen the monitoring of the implementation of Council resolutions by State and non-State actors.

Crimes of sexual violence will stop only if we address the root causes of sexual violence. Such a paradigm shift requires us to pursue efforts to achieve gender equality, include women's empowerment in prevention measures and, more generally, step up support for organizations dedicated to the protection of women's rights and human rights defenders in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000), the twentieth anniversary of which we will celebrate next year.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Allow me at the outset to join others in offering my delegation's heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of Sri Lanka, especially the victims, following the horrific terrorist attack that claimed more than 300 lives and wounded many others. Indonesia strongly condemns that attack.

Let me also thank Germany for convening this very important open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General and all the briefers for their comprehensive and inspirational presentations.

As reported by Secretary-General (S/2019/280), structural discrimination is at the heart of differential impact on the victims of conflict-related sexual violence. Most victims do not seek care owing to a range of challenges, including stigma, threats, fear of reprisal and community pressures. Their reluctance to report prevents their cases from being reported, let alone addressed.

On that note, Indonesia condemns the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war that can exacerbate conflict and impede the restoration of peace. It is very timely for the Security Council to send a strong message of our continued commitment to address that issue. Indonesia

attaches great importance to efforts to end and prevent sexual violence in the context of the women and peace and security agenda.

Indonesia hosted a regional training exercise on women and peace and security on 8 and 9 April. One of its outcomes was a recommendation to establish a global coalition of women networks for peace and tolerance, made up of female peacekeepers, negotiators and mediators. That coalition will strengthen our collective efforts to increase women's contribution to fostering peace and security. In that context, I wish to focus on three points.

First is the centrality of national authorities with the primary responsibility to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence and prioritize the needs of the survivors of those crimes, while permitting no discrimination. Treating such persons as survivors — rather than simply blaming the victims — will help national authorities to develop long-term and practical policies for addressing conflict-related sexual violence, taking into account sociocultural considerations.

Second is the fact that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to end and prevent conflict-related sexual violence. Accountability for such crimes should be considered on a case-by-case basis, using a tailor-made approach in every conflict. For instance, the creation of a specialized police unit and court dedicated to sexual violence might be effective in one conflict situation but not effective at all in others.

Therefore, Indonesia recognizes the importance of approaching such issues on a country-specific basis. We particularly commend the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their efforts to encourage the implementation of joint communiqués to address conflict-related sexual violence between the United Nations and several national Governments. A tailor-made approach will help to ensure both accountability for past crimes and the prevention of future crimes.

Third is the importance of capacity-building to strengthen efforts in eliminating conflict-related sexual violence. In order to address the root causes of conflict, capacity-building should be aimed at building the capacity of law enforcement, strengthening national legislation and ensuring its effective implementation. In that regard, capacity-building programmes must be proportional and responsive in order to ensure that reparation and reconciliation processes are established

for the victims of conflict-related sexual violence and to support the fight against impunity based on political intimidation.

Indonesia has been a champion of the women and peace and security agenda in the region. As one of the largest troop-contributing countries to peacekeeping operations, Indonesia believes that it is crucial to enhance training for United Nations peacekeepers on conflict-related sexual violence. We are glad to note that the Secretary-General also shared similar views in his statement. Therefore, eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse has been integrated into the predeployment curriculum at the Indonesian Peacekeeping Operations Training Centre.

The year 2019 marks the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. It is time to revitalize all parties' commitments to take all possible measures to implement international humanitarian law, including our commitments to end and prevent sexual violence in conflict. Ultimately, our efforts should focus on strengthening national ownership, leadership and capacities for reaching a constructive solution to combating conflict-related sexual violence.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we express our solidarity with the Government and the people of Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the condemnable terrorist acts to which they fell victim.

We thank the German presidency for convening this open debate on the issue of sexual violence in conflict, which is a priority issue for Peru. We particularly welcome your participation, Mr. President, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as that of the other high-level officials and attendees today. We are also grateful for the briefings and moving testimonies delivered by the briefers.

Peru is a country committed to the women and peace and security agenda, which addresses combating sexual violence in conflicts. That commitment is manifested in our leadership of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, which Peru co-chairs with Germany — a country to which we are grateful for its efforts to adopt a needed new draft resolution on conflict-related sexual violence.

Ten years after the adoption of resolution 1888 (2009), which established the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the issue remains particularly

relevant. We are faced today by new modalities of sexual violence, the systematic use of which — whether as a tactic of war or terrorism or as an attack on collective identities — constitutes a threat to international peace and security. My country deplores the magnitude and gravity of the problem. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280) confirms the existence of the nexus linking sexual violence, human trafficking and terrorism, while also highlighting a number of alarming trends, such as that involving sexual violence perpetrated against children.

In that regard, we condemn in the strongest terms all forms of sexual violence in armed conflict. Action to combat those atrocity crimes must include not only protecting victims, but also bringing those responsible to justice. The Council has a very important role to play in that task, in line with resolution 1820 (2008), which states that amnesty cannot be granted for sexual crimes committed in the context of conflict resolution processes. It is also essential to address the root causes of sexual violence. To that end, we must recognize and combat inequality between men and women through the implementation of policies that promote equality, the empowerment of women and the creation of opportunities.

Evidence shows that greater participation of women in decision-making processes results in a lower likelihood of conflict and that the defence and promotion of their rights reduces their vulnerability. We cannot ignore that the majority of sexual violence cases are not reported because of the stigma and fear of the victims or the intimidation they face by their attackers. At the same time, due care for and rehabilitation of victims are indispensable to any sustainable peacebuilding process and include understanding that their trauma is also psychological and has the potential to destroy the social fabric of a community.

The Security Council should also continue to encourage and support specific commitments and plans for the prevention of sexual violence in the conflicts on its agenda by promoting collaboration with local non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities in the field.

In conclusion, I wish to express our appreciation for the important awareness-raising work on sexual violence in conflict that is being carried out by Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege, both Nobel Peace Prize laureates in 2018, and the Special Representative

on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, in line with the priority that the Secretary-General assigns to that issue.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): We would like to welcome you, Sir, the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, and thank you for presiding over our work.

We would also like to express our Government's solidarity with the Government and people of Sri Lanka in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks that left numerous victims.

My delegation commends Secretary-General António Guterres for the high quality of his report on conflict-related sexual violence throughout the world (S/2019/280), as well as Ms. Pramila Patten, Ms. Amal Clooney and Ms. Inas Miloud for their detailed briefings and the relevance of their recommendations. We welcome the presence among us of Ministers, as well as of Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize Laureates in 2018, and express our deep appreciation to them for their commitment to the fight against conflict-related sexual violence.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by Ms. Fatima Mohammed on behalf of the African Union.

As the international community prepares to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), on the impact and role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as the tenth anniversary of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, it is deeply worrying to note, as resolution 1820 (2008) indicates, that sexual violence is increasingly being used as a weapon of war and terrorism and poses a challenge to international peace and security.

Côte d'Ivoire believes that sexual violence constitutes a serious violation of fundamental rights and human dignity, and its multiple consequences on victims have undeniable repercussions on peace, social cohesion and economic development. It is also regrettable to note that this phenomenon is increasingly becoming a lucrative activity, as noted in the Secretary-General's report. Rape — often gang rape — sexual slavery, forced prostitution and many other forms of sexual violence therefore fuel conflict and terrorism.

New security challenges, such as violent extremism and terrorism, sexual and gender-based violence and stigmatization, are negatively impacting women's ability to play their full role in peace, security and development in Africa. However, it should be noted that excellent progress has been made in the fight for the advancement of women in Africa, particularly through the adoption of more relevant legal instruments. The 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the Maputo Protocol, and the African Union Agenda 2063 therefore represent significant progress in promoting gender equality and strengthening women's role in addressing peace, security and development challenges.

The persistence of gender-based sexual violence is less a matter of the existence of normative frameworks than of the effective implementation of sanctions against perpetrators of sexual crimes. My delegation therefore believes that accountability must, so to speak, be one of the main lines of action of States and the international community. To that end, the capacity of national judicial institutions, as well as national and international mechanisms for identifying perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, should be strengthened to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable before the competent courts.

Similarly, the presence of experts on sexual violence issues within sanctions committees would also help to better identify the perpetrators of sexual violence and prompt action provided for by international legislation in that area. In addition, there is a need for measures, including psychosocial, medical and legal measures, to be taken in the context of providing assistance to victims, including children born out of sexual violence.

In the aftermath of its crisis, Côte d'Ivoire firmly committed to fighting against sexual violence and impunity. Those efforts have been acknowledged and commended in the light of the fact that, since 2017, it has been the first and only country to have been removed from the annex to the Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence. The Ivorian Government has also adopted a national strategy to combat gender-based violence, which has resulted in the establishment of a national committee to fight conflict-related sexual violence and the establishment of a specific mechanism to combat rape.

The adoption of that strategy by the armed forces of Côte d'Ivoire and the inclusion of the issue of sexual

violence in the training modules of training offices and military academies have been decisive in the fight against that scourge by reducing the number of sexual violence from 478 cases in 2012 to 30 in 2014, 3 in 2015, 1 attempted rape in 2016 and then zero cases in 2017 and 2018. The revised code of conduct of the armed forces of the Côte d'Ivoire also places particular emphasis on crimes related to sexual violence and the ongoing zero-tolerance policy on those crimes.

Aware that there is a correlation among peace, social cohesion and the empowerment of women, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire attaches particular importance to financing microprojects through microcredits. That policy of supporting women's empowerment has enabled more than 200,000 women to emerge from the clutches of insecurity. At the political level, the Government is working towards greater involvement of women in the country's political life, through a law on the representation of women in elected assemblies, which imposes a minimum quota of 30 per cent of women of the total number of candidates.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire notes that, despite the general awareness of the situation of women and the subsequent progress made through the adoption and strengthening of national and international normative frameworks, multiple challenges remain in the fight against sexual violence in times of conflict and the care of victims. My country commends the leadership of the United Nations and the support of its specialized agencies, and reaffirms its ongoing commitment to the fight against gender-based sexual violence.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We welcome you, Mr. President, in convening and presiding over this meeting. We also welcome the Ministers from Equatorial Guinea and the United Kingdom.

I would like to express our condolences to the families of the victims of the recent heinous terrorist attacks. We affirm our sympathy and solidarity with the Government and the people of Sri Lanka at this time.

We would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/280) and his valuable briefing. We would also like to thank Nobel Peace Prize laureates Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege for their tireless efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict and empower survivors, and Ms. Inas Miloud, a representative of civil society, and Ms. Amal Clooney for their valuable briefings.

I would like to focus my statement on three fundamental issues. The first is sexual violence in conflict as a violation of human rights and a threat to international peace and security. The second is the importance of ensuring accountability and ending impunity for perpetrators. The third relates to ensuring justice for the victims of sexual violence in conflict.

With regard to sexual violence in conflict, more than 10 years ago the Security Council adopted resolution 1820 (2008), in recognition of the fact that sexual violence in conflict represents a threat to international peace and security and requires a serious international response. Since then, unfortunately, these heinous crimes have been on the rise all over the world. They are often used as a tool of intimidation and a tactic of war for targeting specific communities based on their ethnic, religious or political affiliations, with the aim of forcibly displacing them and seizing their property. A case in point is the situation and forced displacement of the Rohingya, a minority in Myanmar. Displacement makes refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), especially women and girls, more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, human trafficking and sexual violence in conflict. Crimes of sexual violence in some conflict zones represent part of the political and terrorist economy of extremist groups, including the terrorist group Da'esh.

With regard to ensuring accountability and ending impunity, and in order to prevent sexual violence in conflict from increasing, we have to hold the perpetrators of these crimes accountable and end their impunity, as laid down in local and international law. These crimes have become a systematic tool of war that can amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Security Council has established a strong normative framework aimed at combating sexual violence in conflict and ensuring accountability for perpetrators, while another important tool at its disposal is the integration of specific measures into the mandates of peacekeeping operations in order to send the message that combating such crimes is one of its priorities. The Council also plays a pivotal role in addressing crimes of sexual violence by strengthening the mandates of peacekeeping operations and United Nations political missions to include the empowerment of women in conflict and post-conflict situations, ensuring accountability for sexual violence crimes and reporting any violations that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Ensuring justice for the victims is a prerequisite to achieving sustainable peace. Sexual violence undermines victims' psychological and physical health and has cumulative effects on societies and generations. Its implications can also undermine the sustainability of peace. In the absence of accountability, conflicts can become protracted and refugees and IDPs may not be able to return to their homes in a safe, dignified and voluntary manner. There are multiple forms of sexual violence in conflict, as well as multiple ways to achieve justice in all its dimensions. That can be done by dealing with the health, psychological, physical, economic and social impact on victims in the short and long terms as well as by treating survivors and their children as victims. In adopting a victim-focused approach, it is vital to take into consideration their culture, values, and social characteristics. We have to improve Member States' capacities to address these situations, enable survivors to receive compensation and justice in a manner that respects their culture as well as their psychological, physical and social health, and ensure that any justice mechanisms are sustainable and enforceable. States have the primary responsibility to provide protection for civilians in conflicts, facilitate victims' access to justice and ensure that the perpetrators of sexual violence crimes are held accountable.

At the international level, we commend the role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. This year marks a decade since the establishment of her mandate pursuant to resolution 1888 (2009). We support her role, based on her mandate, in dealing with the parties to conflicts and exchanging best practices in a manner that strengthens national security and judicial systems with a view to ensuring justice and accountability. We also welcome the serious steps that the Secretary-General has taken to implement his zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. The commitment of the United Nations to holding itself accountable for sexual exploitation and abuse strengthens its credibility and helps efforts aimed at ending sexual violence in conflict.

In conclusion, we stress the importance of ensuring that the Council maintains its unity and that the international community generally addresses the problem of sexual violence in conflict. We are all unquestionably acting on the same principle, which is the condemnation of all forms of sexual violence, especially when committed during conflict. The international community must therefore send a united

message and work collectively to reduce and ultimately end sexual violence in conflict, while ensuring justice for its victims based on the social and cultural specificities of all Member States.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to thank the German presidency for organizing today's meeting and to express our profound gratitude to the participants and briefers for their information about various aspects of the fight against sexual violence and armed conflict.

This year marks a decade since the Security Council established the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Since then the Special Representative and her Office have done extensive work on eliminating this form of crime. They have gained useful experience in cooperating with Governments and other parties to armed conflicts and developing an effective toolkit for combating this type of crime.

The Russian Federation is committed to international cooperation in combating sexual violence in conflict, which is a disgusting crime of war. We firmly support the work of Special Representative Patten and appreciate her personal contribution to efforts to develop and support dialogue with parties to armed conflicts in addressing this issue, help victims and assist in their rehabilitation, as well as to draw public attention to the problems caused by such crimes. We thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and his report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2019/280), which is enabling us to discuss the issue in a productive and comprehensive debate. We have studied with interest the report's very extensive recommendations on ways to cooperate further in combating sexual violence in conflict. Many of the proposals deserve careful and detailed study, and we believe that today's debate is a good opportunity for an open exchange of views on that.

We firmly believe that the key to success in combating sexual violence in conflict is in developing effective measures to eradicate violence against civilians during armed conflicts. But that is just one of the possible crimes that could be committed during an armed conflict. In our view, putting a definitive end to every form of violence against civilians is possible only by resolving armed conflicts through peaceful means and eradicating their root causes. We need concerted work at both the national and international levels if we are to reach that goal as quickly as possible.

In that regard, we want to emphasize once again how important it is to ensure that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict continues to adhere to the mandate established by resolution 1888 (2009). The central focus of her efforts should be situations of armed conflict, and specifically those where sexual violence is widespread. Every conflict situation has specifics that must be taken into account. It is also important not to underestimate the significance of maintaining a united approach to understanding the scope of the Security Council's mandate on combating sexual violence in conflict and of refraining from attempts to broaden its interpretation and take the Council beyond its remit of maintaining international peace and security. A strict distinction should be made between sexual violence as a war crime and as an ordinary criminal offence.

We should remember that the effectiveness of the Council's work in eliminating sexual violence in conflict is directly dependent on overcoming differences, promoting constructive cooperation and preventing the issue from being politicized. We call on everyone to unite their efforts to combat this repugnant crime in the interests of maintaining peace and assisting victims, and for the sake of building a just society where there is no place for any kind of violence at all.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by warmly thanking Germany and in particular you, Mr. President, as its Foreign Minister, for your commitment to the women and peace and security agenda and to eliminating sexual violence in times of conflict. I thank you for this initiative, Mr. President, and for being with us in the Chamber today. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, for their valuable briefings, and to reiterate our full support for them in their and their teams' daily struggle. On behalf of France, I want to express special thanks to Ms. Murad and Dr. Mukwege, whose commitment, courage and vision command our admiration. It is an honour for the Security Council to hear them today and see them side by side before us. They know that they can count on France to support them in the fight against sexual violence, as we have done for many years. Finally, I would like to warmly thank Ms. Amal Clooney and Ms. Inas Miloud for their unwavering commitment to this fight and for their powerful and informative briefings.

At the outset, I want to make a short but worrying comment before returning to possible courses of action that we can take in our work. We must be uncompromising, given that in 2019 we are still facing an intolerable situation. As various of our speakers have eloquently stated, it is our shared responsibility to condemn as firmly as possible the use of sexual violence as a tactic or weapon of war, often on a large scale and sometimes systematically. In 2018, this type of violence once again threatened first and foremost the most vulnerable, the women and girls who continue to be the primary victims of discrimination. It has forcibly displaced them, as happened in South Sudan and Burma. It has been used to repress, terrorize and control populations, as in Syria. Terrorist groups such as Boko Haram have made sexual violence a strategy of action in its own right, understood as such and methodically executed. Migrant women and girls are also particularly vulnerable, as we have seen in Libya and elsewhere.

There are still 47 parties remaining on the Secretary-General's blacklist. While some progress has certainly been made, such as the revised legislation enacted in Afghanistan and the signing of a joint communiqué in Mali, so much remains to be done, including putting a definitive end to issues such as forced marriage, the practice of *bacha bazi* in Afghanistan and the association of rape with adultery. We must seize every political opportunity to make progress in the fight against sexual violence, as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo today, for example.

Combating impunity is an indispensable weapon for deterrence as well as justice in this fight. International tribunals, including the International Criminal Court, to which France affirms its full support, and national, regional and mixed courts must be able to prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes. It is unacceptable, if not inconceivable, that not a single individual associated with Da'esh or Boko Haram who has used sexual violence as a weapon of war on a large scale has ever been convicted. To take just two more examples, full light must be shed on the sexual violence committed in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states, and those responsible must be prosecuted, as the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/280) recommends. Investigative mechanisms should also be able to begin collecting the necessary information immediately so that justice can eventually be done, as in Syria.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the mandate on sexual violence in conflict situations, we have a priority both to consolidate that mandate, of course, but also and above all to strengthen its implementation. I would like to briefly touch on four areas of action in that regard.

First of all, the Security Council has a decisive role to play in fighting sexual violence, which implies that it must be mobilized and united. That is why France supports draft resolution S/2019/328, proposed by Germany. This important draft resolution should make it possible to make major progress on expanding on the declaration adopted by the Group of Seven in Dinar on 5 March, particularly with regard to recognizing a victim-centred approach, emphasizing the fight against impunity and including gender-related crimes, for example, among the most serious types. The draft resolution also requests the Secretary-General to produce a report by 2021 on children born of rape, which is a top priority for France.

In spite of the threats that some have made, I nevertheless want to emphasize how essential it is for France, and for the victims, to ensure that they have access to sexual and reproductive health. That is crucial. The Council should also continue working to impose sanctions on those who are responsible for this type of violence. In that regard, we welcome the explicit criteria added to the mandates of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, the Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya. We also think that the Council should invite Ms. Patten to brief us more regularly on her remarkable efforts to intervene in specific situations. We met with her twice in March and we invite other Council members to do the same.

The second line of action that I would like to highlight is the United Nations itself, which must continue to play a major role in monitoring and implementing this agenda. We want to once again express our full support for Ms. Patten, especially in the often difficult dialogue she has with parties to conflicts. The results she has achieved, for example in Mali and South Sudan, in convincing Riek Machar to give orders to prevent and punish this type of violence, are all illustrations of the effectiveness of her commitment, even if we know that the war is never won and must continue to be waged on a daily basis. We also support the team of

experts working under Ms. Patten's auspices, including by funding its staff as they work to strengthen States' judicial capacities. That is a key element. While much remains to be done, we must strengthen and improve mechanisms such as the mixed unit for rapid intervention and suppression of sexual violence against women and children in the Central African Republic, which should result in trials. Peacekeeping operations must also have the necessary means to protect women in armed conflict, including the deployment of women's protection and gender advisers.

Thirdly, the elimination of sexual violence in conflict can be achieved only with strong support for the members of civil society who work and resist so bravely on the ground. Needless to say I am thinking here of Ms. Murad and Dr. Mukwege, both of whom are a source of inspiration and admiration for the entire international community and with whom we continue to work closely. France is proud to have been the first country to pledge funding for the establishment of a fund for survivors of sexual violence, announced by Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, our Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and Ms. Marlène Schiappa, Secretary of State to the Prime Minister for Equality between Women and Men. France will continue its commitment to providing appropriate assistance to victims of sexual violence as part of its presidency of the Group of Seven (G-7). Ms. Murad and Dr. Mukwege can count on France's support. Our presidency of the G-7 is also a framework for strengthening the monitoring of sexual violence. In the past few years we have cooperated on projects with civil society in Yemen, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Lebanon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo designed to provide holistic care for victims of sexual violence.

Lastly, and we have hammered away at this point in every Security Council debate, only a holistic approach can ensure that the women and peace and security agenda is effectively implemented. Women, who are the primary victims of sexual violence, will be better protected if they can be significant participants in political processes and if they have the same economic and social rights and opportunities as men. It is therefore crucial that we work relentlessly in our fight against sexual violence to address gender inequalities and stereotypes, its underlying causes. Support for stakeholders on the ground is also essential in that regard, which is why President Macron has announced the establishment of a fund of €120 million to support

women's movements in countries of the South. That is also why France, in partnership with Mexico, will host a forum commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, which will bring together States, regional organizations and civil-society actors.

Combating sexual violence is a crucial fight. It is also a fight that should unite us over the long term. On behalf of France, I once again call for unity among all the members of the Council.

Mr. Nkosi (South Africa): At the outset, I would like to thank and commend you, Mr. President, and the Permanent Mission of Germany for organizing this important and pertinent debate. Like other speakers, I also want to take this opportunity to express South Africa's condemnation of the recent terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka and to express our solidarity with the people and Government of Sri Lanka as they mourn their deaths and their loss.

I would like to express South Africa's gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres and his Special Representative, Ms. Pramila Patten, as well as to our distinguished briefers, Dr. Denis Mukwege, Ms. Nadia Murad, Ms. Amal Clooney and Ms. Inas Miloud, for their extremely informative and enlightening briefings and for the heart-wrenching testimonials that we heard this morning.

I also associate my delegation with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the 54 member States of the African Union (AU) on this very important subject.

South Africa believes that violence against women is a serious crime that warrants more urgent and decisive action by the international community. Sexual violence, wherever it occurs, fundamentally dehumanizes its victims and irreparably damages their human dignity. Sexual violence in conflict is often used as an act of war to achieve psychological, military and political objectives and control. In areas rich in natural resources such as our continent, sexual violence is used to depopulate, displace and terrorize communities. The devastating effects of sexual violence have a lasting impact on survivors, who have to deal with post-conflict challenges that include trauma, revictimization and stigmatization in their communities.

While we know that anyone can fall victim to sexual violence, we find it deeply disturbing that women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected. Many also live through the prolonged

trauma of raising children born of rape, who are often rejected by society and deprived of their rights and access to social services. That is why gender-sensitive responses and programmes must be tailored to be survivor-oriented. South Africa firmly believes that the survivors of sexual violence must be provided with essential services, in line with our long-held position that sexual and reproductive health services are not only an important component of the right to health but are critical to women's empowerment generally. In the context of sexual violence in conflict, a lack of access to such services threatens the most sacrosanct of all human rights, the right to life itself. In spite of the lateness of the hour, South Africa still hopes that the Council can agree on a consensus draft resolution that protects survivors, holds perpetrators accountable and metes out appropriate punishment to the perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict.

To effectively address sexual violence in conflict, South Africa believes that we need an integrated and comprehensive approach. That includes providing multisectoral services to ensure reintegration support for survivors, including shelters. We must develop appropriate economic livelihood programmes. That is an integral part of societal prevention mechanisms, conflict resolution, transitional justice and peacebuilding. In line with the Framework of Cooperation between the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the African Union Commission, South Africa acknowledges accountability mechanisms as an important aspect of ways to prevent sexual violence in conflict. The Framework is aimed at assisting AU member States in combating impunity for sexual violence in conflict and enhancing the capacity of criminal justice systems in countries in conflict and post-conflict to respond to suspected cases of sexual violence in conflict.

The Council must show that it can make a perceptible transition from rhetoric to reality when it comes to dealing with the challenges that victims are confronted with in their daily lives during armed conflict. We need to strengthen accountability for perpetrators, with survivors at the heart of our efforts.

South Africa supports the more frequent use of measures under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations and the capacity-building of States to address the matter at a national level in an integrated manner.

South Africa commends the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We call for the strengthening of their capacity so that they are able to deliver on the mandate given to them by the Council.

South Africa supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to strengthen our efforts aimed at addressing sexual violence in armed conflict. That includes, inter alia, first, sexual violence as part of the designation criteria for sanctions; secondly, addressing the nexus between trafficking in persons and conflict-related sexual violence, in accordance with resolutions 2331 (2016) and 2388 (2017); thirdly, using field visits to draw attention to concerns about sexual violence; and, lastly, putting in place constitutional, legislative and institutional arrangements to comprehensively address conflict-related sexual violence.

The security sector of conflict and post-conflict countries must be reformed so as to prevent and better respond to sexual violence. In order to build effective, non-discriminatory and representative security institutions, it is essential that we provide personnel with effective and sustainable gender training and capacity-building. Access to justice for survivors of sexual violence would also significantly contribute to a well-functioning and gender-sensitive security framework.

Given the inextricable link between sexual violence in conflict situations and gender inequality, South Africa therefore advocates for the equal and meaningful participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. In that regard, Member States must continually look at measures to strengthen the full and effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, pioneered by the sister Republic of Namibia, to whom we pay tribute today. The resolution provides the basis for forming partnerships with civil society, the private sector and community-based organizations.

Finally, South Africa looks forward to continuing this debate during our presidency in October as we prepare for the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Let me join other speakers in expressing our deepest condolences to the people and the Government of Sri Lanka following the

tragic terrorist attacks that took place this past Sunday. Poland strongly condemns such heinous acts of terror.

We commend Germany for convening this important debate. We would also like to thank you personally, Mr. President, for chairing this meeting. Allow me also to extend our gratitude to today's excellent briefers. We are truly honoured by their presence with us here today, and we deeply appreciate their inspirational and encouraging presentations. On the tenth anniversary of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Special Representative Ms. Pramila Patten and all her predecessors for their dedication and service. We fully stand behind her mandate.

We are outraged by the persistent and widespread sexual violence in armed conflict committed by State and non-State actors, as documented in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280). Sexual violence is a universal tragic phenomenon that needs to come to an end, whether it be in conflict or post-conflict situations. International cooperation is needed, especially now at a time of increased violence against women and girls and men and boys, to combat the use of sexual violence as a tool of terror and humiliation during war. We would therefore like to commend the efforts of the German presidency to present the new draft resolution on conflict-related sexual violence contained in document S/2019/328, which, in Poland's view, will strengthen this important agenda.

The recent report of the Secretary-General highlights the various challenges we face in addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Allow me to emphasize two areas that we believe need our particular attention today, namely, accountability and the situation of children born of sexual violence.

First, we welcome the focus on accountability of the current report and of our debate today as one of the means to fight and eliminate conflict-related sexual violence. The issue of accountability for conflict-related sexual violence should be of crucial importance to the work of the Security Council, as it reflects the effectiveness of its work. Despite all the challenges, the accountability measures for conflict-related sexual violence committed by both non-State and State actors should be implemented decisively by the international community. Otherwise, the lack of accountability encourages and increases tolerance towards gender-

based violence in conflicts. In that context, we would like to stress the significant progress in ensuring accountability for sexual and gender-based violence achieved by the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as the non-permanent international criminal tribunals and similar courts. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that the primary responsibility to act and pursue accountability resides within States, as the ICC's jurisdiction is complementary to national jurisdictions.

On the other hand, accountability cannot be achieved without knowledge of the crimes. Regrettably, the vast majority of victims do not report rape and other forms of sexual violence because of the discrimination and stigma behind them. That not only contributes to the culture of impunity but also prevents survivors of sexual violence from accessing medical care and legal assistance. In that regard, we support the Secretary-General's call on traditional and religious leaders to engage, in particular to mitigate the stigma suffered by survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and to facilitate their reintegration and that of their children.

Let me now turn briefly to the issue of children born of sexual violence. Supporting victims of sexual violence should be as important as preventing such crimes in times of conflict. The voices of survivors need to be heard in order to effectively implement policies that protect them. The traumatic experiences haunt victims for their whole lives and, unfortunately, psychological and mental support is often omitted.

Sexual violence has massive long-term repercussions. That is particularly true for children born of sexual violence. It is difficult to think of a more tragic situation than that faced by innocent children who, through no fault of their own, suffer not only discrimination but also the most extreme forms of stigma by their families and their communities. They are often denied nationality, excluded from school, deprived of medical treatment and subjected to physical and psychological violence only because they were born of sexual violence. Such children are as much victims of sexual violence as their mothers.

We are pleased to see that, with the latest Secretary-General's report and the proposed draft resolution, some light has been shed on the need for the protection of children born of sexual violence and that the issue has been receiving the attention of the international community, including the Security Council. We hope that the Arria Formula meeting organized by Poland

last October on children born of sexual violence contributed to those efforts.

Let me conclude my statement by reiterating our strong support for the important role of civil society groups, human rights defenders, journalists and media workers who assist victims and report on sexual violence in conflict. Without their courage, passion and dedication, the progress achieved by the international community would not be possible.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership and eminent work of Ms. Pramila Patten and her Office, and to thank her for her informative briefing. I also thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Amal Clooney, Dr. Denis Mukwege, Ms. Inas Miloud and Ms. Nadia Murad, to whom I would like to express my admiration for their struggles and deep convictions. Let me recall what the Norwegian Nobel Committee said in its considerations in awarding that defender of women's rights the Nobel Peace Prize:

“Nadia Murad is herself a victim of war crimes. She refused to accept the social codes that require women to remain silent and ashamed of the abuses to which they have been subjected. She has shown uncommon courage in recounting her own sufferings and speaking up on behalf of other victims.”

In analysing the valuable report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280), we are shocked to note that, even taking into account the significant advances of the past 10 years, sexual violence remains a cruel scourge and has even worsened in conflict scenarios.

In anticipation of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption resolution 1325 (2000) and the tenth anniversary of the creation of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, it is even more crucial to make greater efforts to implement the resolutions of the Security Council. Sexual violence in conflict is used to displace communities, as a means of repression and as a tactic of terrorism. We cannot therefore hope to mitigate or eliminate conflicts if we do not recognize and face in their full measure the impact and consequences of these crimes on the search for and maintenance of peace. There are several urgent aspects in particular that deserve special attention.

The first is ensuring that victims participate in decision-making processes so as to ensure that the initiatives promoted address their concerns fully, including in post-conflict situations. In this regard, we applaud the progress of the United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and we hope that the number of projects in the process of implementation can be expanded.

Secondly, we must insist on all possible measures to end impunity for crimes of sexual violence, since such impunity also generates space for new violations. We must therefore support all reforms that increase the effectiveness of justice systems, such as reforms of legal frameworks to take these crimes into account, always ensuring that survivors and witnesses are protected. Only then will we create the conditions for victims to be heard and receive support without being stigmatized.

Thirdly, it is essential to incorporate sexual violence into the criteria for imposing sanctions and that the perpetrators of sexual violence listed in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General on this issue. It is vital that gender experts be mandated to the sanctions committees and that the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict report regularly to them. We consider it essential that the Security Council carry out missions to conflict areas, concentrating especially on learning first-hand the concerns of victims of sexual violence. Likewise, the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security is a platform of immense value in monitoring the compliance of State and non-State parties to conflict.

Fourthly, it is a priority for victims of sexual violence to have access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health services, since we know that women and girls in conflict are at greater risk of unwanted pregnancies, mortality maternal, severe sexual and reproductive injury and of contracting sexually transmitted infections.

For the Government of President Danilo Medina Sánchez, efforts to end gender-based violence and extend access to sexual and reproductive health services involve not only access to clinical services but also protection against forced and early marriage of boys and girls and all other prejudices resulting from the backwardness of the patriarchal mentality. I am referring to primordial components of our sociopolitical agenda.

Denying women and girls access to sexual and reproductive health care is exposing them to degrading, cruel and inhuman treatment, leading only to more suffering for the victims of sexual violence. I affirm that for our Government and President Medina, these are matters of non-negotiable principles, regardless of the political consequences in terms of criticism or disagreement on the part of traditional sectors. For us, the issue of gender is and will be a matter of the first order — simply, the adaptation of the Dominican Republic to the modern currents of action and thought in relation to women, their rights and the respect that has long been withheld from them.

Finally, we welcome the fact that the Special Representative is working in coordination with other United Nations bodies in this regard, and we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to strengthen the collaboration of regional and subregional organizations with the United Nations in this area. I wish to highlight here the goals outlined by the Spotlight Initiative as an example of a strategic alliance that we believe will promote peace and security for women and that we hope will make important contributions towards prevention.

Facing a problem of this magnitude requires efforts on the part of all. Therefore, we appeal to all Member States to fully meet their commitments to international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We recognize the invaluable work of civil society, youth organizations and defenders of women's rights, and we appeal for their ongoing support and leadership in this crucial struggle for the future of humankind.

The President: The Council has before it a draft resolution contained in document S/2019/328, submitted by Germany.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, France, Germany, Indonesia, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

None

Abstaining:

China, Russian Federation

The President: The draft resolution received 13 votes in favour and two abstentions. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2467 (2019).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We were unable to support resolution 2467 (2019), submitted by Germany.

The Russian Federation firmly condemns sexual violence in armed conflict. We have consistently advocated eradicating that abhorrent war crime. Any type of violence against civilians in wartime is absolutely unacceptable, and sexual abuse is equally unacceptable at any time, not just during armed conflict. In the circumstances, we are truly disappointed with the approach of the coordinators of the negotiation process, who in hastily preparing for today's open debate submitted a non-consensus draft text. That is a dangerous precedent that could have an extremely negative effect on the Council's working methods in the future. It was only at the last minute that we succeeded in agreeing to exclude the provisions that were wholly unacceptable, enabling us to abstain in the voting.

The previous version of the resolution could have taken the Council's mandate beyond its remit of maintaining peace and security and expanded the powers of the Secretary-General and the functions of his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. There was no explanation of the attempts to use a thematic resolution to intrusively expand the mandates of various United Nations mechanisms and bodies by directing them to tackle the issue of combating sexual violence. Nor did we see any reason for the request for numerous reports from the Secretary-General on various aspects of sexual violence. We are concerned about the efforts to increase the number of bureaucratic United Nations bodies in order to create the appearance of robust activity. It is unacceptable to constantly promote concepts and terms that have either previously failed to achieve consensus or been rejected by the Council.

No one should even try to set us up as adversaries in the fight against sexual violence in conflict. Our position on the issue remains firm and unwavering. It

is an evil that must be eliminated. But as a permanent member of the Security Council, we have a special responsibility to the international community not to allow the issue of sexual violence in conflict to be exploited and manipulated. The Council is a serious body, and we cannot damage its reputation in the eyes of the international community. It must make balanced decisions, set clear, achievable objectives and leave no room for arbitrary or biased interpretations of them.

Together with China we drafted our own alternative text on the subject of sexual violence in conflict, which in our view corresponded much more accurately to the objectives of today's meeting. However, following the adoption of the resolution submitted by Germany, we decided not to take it further.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China attaches great importance to combating sexual violence in conflict and has always firmly supported the international community in its efforts in that regard.

The Chinese delegation participated constructively and responsibly in the consultations on the related draft resolutions, proposing a number of recommendations and amendments. We believe that the Council should address sexual violence in conflict in line with its mandate, instead of going too far to address what should have been entrusted to other bodies. Considering with regard to the establishment of special mechanisms, it is important to have extensive discussions well in advance. It is vital to fully respect the sovereignty of host countries and support their Governments in playing a leading role. We also believe that any related sanctions measures should strictly comply with the Council's mandates and be subject to case-by-case deliberations. Regrettably, those propositions and concerns were not fully reflected in resolution 2467 (2019). China therefore had no option but to abstain in the voting on it. I want to reiterate that China is willing to continue to cooperate constructively with all the relevant parties in order to tackle sexual violence in conflict.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), submitted by Germany, which we thank for its initiative and efforts. The resolution enables several important advances, including strengthening the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, as well as recognizing an approach focused on the survivors of sexual violence and including a request that by 2021 the

Secretary-General produce a report on children born out of rape. That is my first point.

Secondly, it must be acknowledged that important concessions were made under pressure from several permanent members of the Council who did not allow the text to go as far as we would have liked. We were particularly shocked that one State demanded the removal of the reference to sexual and reproductive health, which had been agreed on in resolutions 1889 (2009) and 2106 (2013). We deplore the fact that permanent members of the Council should threaten to use the veto to challenge 25 years of progress on women's rights in situations of armed conflict. It is inexplicable that access to sexual and reproductive health care is not explicitly acknowledged for victims of sexual violence, who are often the targets of atrocities and barbarous mutilations. The victims clearly need that care. We are aware of the differences of opinion among members of the Council on that point, but in the specific context of sexual violence in times of conflict, that omission is unacceptable and undermines the dignity of women.

It is also intolerable and incomprehensible that the Security Council is unable to recognize that women and girls who have been victims of sexual violence in times of conflict and have clearly not chosen to become pregnant should have the right to decide to terminate their pregnancies. France will maintain its position that we should ensure that women have full access to sexual and reproductive health care and rights in every context. We will continue to support and promote that approach in the Security Council, in other United Nations bodies and elsewhere. Women must be able to make decisions freely about their own bodies.

My third and final point, and I would like to conclude on a positive note, is that there is no ambiguity. All of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the women and peace and security agenda, which have been reaffirmed in the resolution we have just adopted (resolution 2467 (2019)), constitute the framework for our collective action, including paragraph 19 of resolution 2106 (2013) and paragraph 10 of resolution 1889 (2009) on sexual and reproductive health. The text we have just adopted is therefore a significant milestone resolution, but it is not the end of our journey. On behalf of France, I would like to issue a renewed call that we continue together the fight against sexual violence in conflict.

Mr. Kenes (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to reiterate that my country also welcomes the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019). I believe that the main message retained from that adoption is that the resolution confirms the responsibility and legitimacy of the Security Council in the fight against cases of sexual violence in conflict — there is no doubt about that for my country.

We welcome the adoption of today's resolution and, as indicated in my statement earlier, Belgium commends the progress represented by the resolution, which also serves to explain our voting in support of the resolution proposed by Germany. We regret, however, that it has not been possible to respond to the needs of victims with regard to sexual and reproductive health. I can identify to a great extent with the statement just made by the Ambassador of France.

I also wish to add that we regret that the essential role of civil society in uncovering atrocities could not be adequately reflected in the text. Other less important issues are also worthy of our attention, but like the Permanent Representative of France, I would also like to conclude on an essential point that I made in my earlier statement — for us, this resolution represents an important step, but above all in view of the needs of the victims, I believe that the Security Council should continue its work and shift into a higher gear going forward.

Mr. Nkosi (South Africa): On behalf of my delegation, let me take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for your personal conviction and outstanding leadership on this very pertinent subject. At the same time, I wish to thank the Permanent Mission of Germany for submitting the resolution on this matter (resolution 2467 (2019)), the adoption of which we welcome here in the Chamber.

South Africa's vote in support of the German text on sexual violence in conflict is a strong indication of its unwavering commitment to a zero tolerance for sexual violence in conflict settings. That is despite the Council's inability to advance this agenda in a meaningful way that would protect the victims of sexual violence and restore their dignity.

We engaged constructively in this process in order to advance a principled position focusing on three areas — the critical link between illicit trade in natural resources and sexual violence, which continues to fuel that heinous crime; accountability for the perpetrators;

and a survivor-centred approach. In that regard, South Africa advocated the provision of comprehensive essential services, in particular for sexual and reproductive health, given the importance of those services to the lives of victims of sexual violence. In that regard, we wish to reiterate our belief that everyone has the right to have access to health-care services, including reproductive health care.

It is regrettable that the adopted text does not take into consideration the gains made over the past number of years in this very important area. We are disappointed that the adopted text has departed from the initial objective and intention expressed by the penholder, which was aimed at providing maximum protection for the victims of sexual violence and ensuring full accountability for the perpetrators of such grave and inhumane violations.

It is unfortunate that the Council could not uphold its own consensus reached in previous resolutions in the area of sexual and reproductive health. On the one hand, the text calls for a survivor-centred approach, while on the other hand it is denying survivors essential sexual and reproductive health services when they need them most. The Council is therefore telling survivors of sexual violence in conflict that consensus is more important than their needs.

We will continue nevertheless to advocate a survivor-centred approach in the discussions on sexual violence in conflict in order to ensure that the Council remains committed to its obligations, including — and most importantly — the protection of victims.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Lord Ahmad (United Kingdom): May I first extend my congratulations to Germany on behalf of the United Kingdom for having achieved a successful outcome to resolution 2467 (2019). In doing so, may I also attach myself totally in support of the remarks made by the Ambassador of France in connection with the achievements behind this resolution, while also recognizing the important steps that remain for the Security Council in ensuring that we truly do put survivors at the heart of our approach. There are many achievements behind this resolution, including three key elements that I highlighted during my earlier statement.

First, there is a recognition of the survivor-centred approach, although as our colleague from South Africa has just pointed out, more steps need to be taken to achieve true justice and accountability in that respect. Secondly, the resolution does acknowledge conflict-related sexual violence and its disproportionate impact on women and girls. Thirdly, it acknowledges the important role that civil society plays.

But again, it must be made clear — and that is why I made this point in my original statement — that we deeply regret the language on services provided for survivors of sexual violence, recognizing the acute need for those services to include comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care. We were very clear in that regard in my earlier statement.

I support the efforts made by other Security Council members, including yourself, Mr. President, and the efforts that Germany and France will continue to make, as well as other colleagues, in ensuring that we keep this important priority on our agenda. I assure you that the United Kingdom will continue to support access to sexual and reproductive health care for survivors of sexual violence around the world — that is a priority. If we are to have a survivor-centred approach, we cannot ignore that important priority.

The President: I shall now give the floor to Ms. Murad to make a statement after the voting.

Ms. Murad (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to once again thank the German delegation for having organized this important meeting, as well as the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten.

Earlier, I asked that all members of the Security Council vote in favour of resolution 2467 (2019), which supports all victims of sexual violence. As a victim myself, I believe that the resolution is a step in the right direction. The adoption of the resolution must now be followed by practical steps in order to achieve radical changes on the ground. I stand together with male and female survivors throughout the world in saying that we depend on all present here in the Chamber to uphold this resolution. Impunity is no longer an option. All programmes and initiatives must focus on survivors as their basis.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Miloud.

Ms. Miloud: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to voice the concerns

of my fellow Libyan women and indigenous people. I would just like to respond by saying that a survivor-centred approach does mean the availability of services related to sexual and reproductive health, but it also means the inclusion of those services for everyone and leaving no one behind.

I also want to add that I may not know the destiny that might face me or my colleagues when I leave the Security Council today. This is a very critical moment in our country and, as I said earlier, attacks against women human rights defenders are on the rise. I would just like to say that we are facing that risk today and we are relying on the Security Council to take firm action to protect women and girls and women human rights defenders in Libya.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Patten.

Ms. Patten: I would like to thank Germany for its leadership in spearheading this resolution (resolution 2467 (2019)), which marks the tenth anniversary of this mandate. I would also like to thank all members of the Council for the resolution and the way in which the resolution has demonstrated the Council's receptiveness to many of the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

From the perspective of mandate-holder, I want to thank all members of the Council because despite the limitations that many members have highlighted I see the resolution as a step in the right direction and, in my view it is very operationally oriented. The main focus of the resolution is on prevention, full justice and accountability, and a survivor-centred approach, which is fully in line with the strategic priorities that I set for the mandate.

The resolution has significant value in the sense that it is operationally oriented. Both its preambular and operative paragraphs reaffirm and recognize some new elements that are critical for my mandate — the recognition that women and girls are specifically targeted; the recognition that the violence is not only widespread and systematic but has also become very brutal; the recognition of different vulnerable groups, so that we have departed from treating victims as a homogeneous group and recognize that men and boys are also being affected; the focus on the consistent and rigorous prosecution of sexual violence; and the focus on the root causes of sexual violence — which will all be very helpful to me in taking this mandate forward.

I wish to sincerely thank the members of the Council for the focus that they have brought on the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination, as well as a range of other factors that exacerbate the disproportionate impact of sexual violence. In spite of its limitations, the resolution is groundbreaking to the extent that it is the first resolution that emphasizes the need for a survivor-centred approach. It is also the first resolution that recognizes the plight of children born out of sexual violence and calls for respect for their rights, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Last but not least, I want to emphasize the important recognition by the resolution of the use of sexual violence as part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups and the importance of survivors being treated as victims and not as intelligence assets or affiliates of such terrorist groups. From my side, we look forward to submitting a gap assessment and recommendations to the Council in next year's report.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I also wish to inform all concerned that we will be carrying on this open debate through the lunch hour, as we have a very large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary): I thank you very much, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address this respected audience.

I would first like to underline that Hungary is committed to gender equality, to promoting the social and political position of women and to implementing the women and peace and security agenda as well as resolution 1325 (2000). Sexual violence against women in conflict is an important issue for and in Hungary. It is also a sensitive issue because my grandparents' generation had first-hand experience in that regard during the Second World War — we do not want to see those times repeated. That is why we consider resolution 1820 (2008) as a milestone resolution that considers

sexual violence to be an obstacle to maintaining international peace and security.

We believe that it is absolutely unacceptable and outrageous that according to UNICEF's annual report of 2017, there are still more than 15 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 who are victims of sexual violence. I would also like to draw the attention of members of the Council to the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018* of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which states that 71 per cent of the victims of human traffickers are women and girls and that three quarters of them are kidnapped for sexual exploitation.

I would like to ask the Council to consider the establishment of a solid legal framework to be able to address the issue of sexual violence in conflict situations. I truly believe that the fight against the impunity of those who have committed such crimes is a common responsibility of the United Nations and its States Members. We believe that if there is impunity for those who commit such terrible crimes, that may serve as encouragement for further terrible crimes, which we must definitely prevent and avoid. That is why we believe that there is a necessity to involve more and more experts in international monitoring committees, United Nations fact-finding missions and the sanctions committees of the Security Council.

I would like to inform the Council that Hungary has been elected to the Executive Board of UN-Women. After having signed a donor agreement, we paid \$100,000 to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Last but not least, I would like to inform the Council that we are considering the establishment of a national action plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and we have already begun to prepare the guidelines attached to the women and peace and security agenda.

We will support Ms. Nadia Murad's initiative to help the survivors of massacres and sexual violence. We have already helped communities living in Iraq and the neighbourhood to be able to stay there or return to the places from which they previously had to escape.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Mr. Soini (Finland): I wish to express my appreciation to Ms. Nadia Murad, Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Inas Miloud for their statements today. I also

want to thank the Secretary-General and Foreign Minister Maas for organizing this important debate.

Violence against innocent people is used as a weapon of war to cause fear and shame. Ending the abuse of civilians in conflicts is possible; it is a question of our resolve. The international norms exist; we just need to make sure they are respected. This very Chamber is the place where change can and must start. The members of the Security Council bear an enormous responsibility. There can be no excuses. Every act against civilians in every conflict must be condemned by all actors.

Sexual violence in conflicts affects not only those directly targeted, but also their families, communities and entire societies. Actors such as Ms. Murad and Dr. Mukwege have helped to bring the consequences of these dreadful crimes to light. They deserve our respect, but they deserve action even more. Preventing conflict-related sexual violence starts during times of peace. Respect for the human rights of women and men and the rule of law are of utmost importance. Enhancing women's full and effective participation in society is also a foundation for preventing sexual violence. Most victims are women and girls, but we should not forget that men and boys are targeted as well. All survivors have their own experiences of conflict and their own specific needs. That is why we need survivor-centred responses, as has been pointed out today.

Efforts to fight impunity for the most serious international crimes must be strengthened. This requires capacity-building of national authorities in order to bring perpetrators to justice. The United Nations Team of Experts on Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict is doing valuable work in this regard. Finland, for its part, has supported the work of Justice Rapid Response and UN-Women to train experts in investigating these crimes. Measures to combat and prevent sexual violence should be part of all international crisis management operations and humanitarian aid. For example, Finland, together with Norway, has deployed a specialized police team to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. What we want them to do is strengthen the capacity of local police in prevention and prosecution.

Amnesty for these crimes in ceasefires or peace agreements must be ruled out. Perpetrators need to be held accountable, otherwise peace can be interpreted as condoning crime. We need to improve assistance to victims and access to health care and other services.

I would like to commend the important work of the International Criminal Court and its Trust Fund for Victims. Finland will continue to support its work; our latest contribution was earmarked for victims of sexual violence.

Protecting innocent civilians is our first priority. Other considerations must come afterwards. This is possible, but a change in our attitude is needed and needed now.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lee Taeho (Republic of Korea): I would like to extend my deepest condolences, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea, to the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka, which Korea condemns in the strongest terms. At the same time, my Government would like to express a sense of solidarity with the victims' families and the Sri Lankan people at this difficult time.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for the initiative you have taken to convene today's open debate. I also extend my appreciation to the briefers for their presentations and testimonies, which have taken us to the heart of the harsh realities on the ground. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative and, with the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) fast approaching next year, today's meeting could not be more relevant.

One of the foremost achievements we have made over the years, in my view, is that we increasingly recognize that sustaining peace is inextricably linked with gender equality and women's leadership. More importantly, this recognition is steadily transforming into global norms and being mainstreamed in our societies. However, much still needs to be done. In this regard, I would like to highlight some points on this important topic.

First, we must renew our commitments on the importance of the prevention of conflicts. Responding to conflict-related sexual violence is important, but it is more important to make efforts to stop it from happening in the first place. Enhancing women's roles and leadership across the entire continuum of conflict should be one of the most effective ways to prevent sexual violence. Obviously, it is through women's

participation and empowerment that this could be achieved. In recognition of this, my Government places great emphasis on increasing women's participation in peacekeeping operations. As of 2019, we have filled approximately 17 per cent of our peacekeeping staff officer and observer positions with women, exceeding the previous United Nations target of 15 per cent. We are seeking to do more, aiming to reach the new target of 25 per cent over the next 10 years, by 2028.

Secondly, we should not forget that resolution 1325 (2000) is fundamentally a human rights mandate. Sexual violence should never be a tactic of war and should be seen through the lens of a survivor-centred approach. Focusing on survivors' needs and demands is indeed a prerequisite for a more holistic approach to protecting individuals from sexual violence in conflict and preventing the survivors of sexual violence from being further victimized and stigmatized.

As a key pillar of Korea's new Action with Women and Peace initiative, launched last year, Korea is supporting projects that address the needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations in certain countries in Asia and Africa through the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF. Korea will contribute a further \$8 million by 2020 to support these projects. A survivor-centred approach will be at the centre of all these activities.

Thirdly, we should engage all key actors and stakeholders, including civil society. Every actor has a vital role to play in implementing the women and peace and security agenda. As such, they need to shoulder and fulfil their respective commitments so that their engagement will eventually contribute to ending impunity of conflict-related sexual violence.

My Government is working closely with experts and civil society both at home and on the ground in target countries on the implementation of its Action with Women and Peace initiative. As part of this initiative, we plan to convene the first annual international conference on Action with Women and Peace this coming July in Seoul. I look forward to it proving to be an excellent platform for various actors to discuss issues of critical importance on the women and peace and security agenda.

Combating conflict-related sexual violence and addressing the women and peace and security agenda is very close to the hearts of Koreans. The Republic of Korea is still engaging in efforts to support and help

recover the honour and dignity of so-called comfort women victimized during the Second World War. Many of them are passing away without having their lifelong agony fully addressed. We believe it is crucial to ensure that lessons are learned from their painful experiences.

The instruments, strategies and political commitments are in place; now it is time to translate them into action. On this meaningful occasion, I would like to reaffirm the Republic of Korea's full commitment to engaging in international efforts to advance the women, peace and security agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Ms. Atanacković (Serbia): I address the Council today on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, Mrs. Zorana Mihajlović, who is also Minister for Construction.

Before I proceed with my statement, I would like to express my profound condolences to the Government and people of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the tragedy caused by the terror attacks on Easter Sunday. We condemn those despicable acts in the strongest terms.

Serbia strongly supports activities aimed at preventing all forms of violence, including sexual violence, in armed conflicts. Considering that issue at the United Nations, with full cooperation by all relevant actors — States, international organizations and civil society — is a prerequisite for a wider, more efficient and effective engagement. The first steps in that direction were made with the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). Serbia supports the efforts of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and other United Nations mechanisms created to further those goals. We welcome the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019) today.

Recognizing the importance of global efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict, Serbia endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict proposed by the United Kingdom in a meeting held on the margins of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly in September 2013. On the basis of resolution 1325 (2000), Serbia adopted a national action plan for its implementation for the period 2017-2020. After all, our common goal at the global level cannot be achieved without adequate measures at the national level. Those national measures are aimed, inter

alia, at establishing an effective prevention system and punishing perpetrators.

Serbia is a State party to the Rome Statute and supports the efforts of the International Criminal Court to prosecute crimes of sexual violence in conflict. Serbia also fully cooperated with the Hague Tribunal in the prosecution of crimes of sexual violence in conflict in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, while the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor of the Republic of Serbia is charged with the prosecution of such crimes at the national level.

There is no doubt that each and every crime deserves punishment. That is true of the crimes committed during armed conflict, as well as of the crimes committed in the aftermath of conflict, when the vulnerability of certain categories of persons — such as women, children and the elderly — is patently evident. The stigma, as well as the profound psychological consequences, are felt long after the occurrence of such crimes and victims avoid speaking about their suffering for many years. Serbia supports a victim-centred approach aimed at providing comprehensive medical, psychological, legal and socioeconomic assistance.

Encouraging victims of sexual violence to report the crime is the first step towards investigating and punishing perpetrators, as well as in efforts to prevent those crimes. It is therefore important to ensure that victims have an opportunity to report cases of sexual violence both during and after conflict. Serbia is committed to establishing a system of prevention through the inclusion of the gender dimension in its national security forces, as well as its international peacekeeping missions.

One victim of such violence is one too many and each victim is entitled to have access to justice. At the same time, speculating on the numbers of victims and insisting on a hierarchy of victims according to ethnic, religious and other affiliations, or indeed by the gender of the victim, often leads to politicization and does not contribute to the achievement of reconciliation in post-conflict societies.

Witness protection is of particular importance for determining accountability and for punishing perpetrators. In the absence of written documents, the most important sources of evidence are witness testimonies. Governments, therefore, as well as other international institutions involved in the prosecution of those crimes, must provide adequate witness protection,

including exclusion of the public from the process and the protection of witness and victim identities.

The international community should support countries through various programmes to strengthen existing institutions and help establish new institutions, including ad hoc tribunals for violence of any kind, especially sexual violence, in conflict areas. Other relevant measures include mediation training and conflict negotiations at local and national levels. All parties involved in armed conflict should provide for the necessary measures; after all, it is never too late to punish perpetrators and achieve the justice that victims deserve.

Once again, I would like, on behalf of Serbia, to thank all Council members for their continued dedication to this issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ghana.

Mrs. Pobee (Ghana): It is an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network to the United Nations, which is co-chaired by Ghana and Germany.

At the outset, the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network wishes to thank the Federal Republic of Germany for convening today's open debate on the women and peace and security agenda, with a focus on sexual violence in conflict. I also wish to express the Group's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the subject (S/2019/280) and to all the briefers for their informative briefings and contributions.

It is a sad fact that, throughout history, sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war, often employed as a deliberate strategy by State and non-State actors. It is even more disheartening that, in spite of the landmark Security Council resolutions that condemn such horrific crimes and acknowledge the threats they pose to international peace and security, sexual violence continues to be a common feature of armed conflicts around the world.

It is significant, therefore, that this debate is taking place in the tenth year of the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence and in the lead-up to the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). It is an opportune moment to explore the root causes and effects of

conflict-related sexual violence and how to enhance preventive mechanisms, promote survivor-centred responses and ensure justice and accountability.

The Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network wishes to focus this intervention on five major areas of this issue. First and foremost, we share the view that structural gender inequality and discrimination are at the heart of conflict-related sexual violence and must be given due primacy in our collective and national preventive efforts. Addressing the imbalances in power relations between men and women and promoting gender equality and women's full inclusion in all aspects of national life cannot be discounted in that effort.

We encourage Member States to pursue the necessary national policies, legislation, education and advocacy at all levels of society in that regard. We also call upon the international community to continue providing strong support to Member States, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations, to enable them to fulfil their national responsibilities and deliver on their commitments in response to the scourge of sexual violence in conflict.

Secondly, the Group is of the view that the nexus between sexual violence, human trafficking, terrorism and violent extremism is critical and must be clearly understood in order to inform strategies in dealing with that scourge and to better address specific vulnerabilities in specific conflict situations. We share the view that victims are not a homogeneous group and that a better appreciation of the scope, patterns and emerging trends in the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war would enhance our responses and preventive mechanisms.

The high-level United Nations-African Union-African Women Leaders Network joint fact-finding missions to conflict zones in Africa in 2017 and 2018 provided significant outcomes to better target appropriate responses in those situations. We wish to advocate continuing support for that unique partnership and collaborative effort between the United Nations, the African Union and the African Women Leaders Network for African conflict situations.

Thirdly, it is critical that the international community supports a survivor-centred and community-led approach in prevention efforts and responses to sexual violence in conflict situations. Enhanced support for survivors must include strengthening medical,

psychosocial, physiological and rehabilitation platforms that prioritize the rights and needs of survivors.

We must engage religious and traditional leaders within affected communities to mitigate stigma and the reintegration of victims and their children in society. Women-led organizations, especially in Africa, have demonstrated a real potential for impact in those interventions and, with predictable funding and capacity-building, they can also be mobilized to provide a reliable vehicle to enhance informal community-level protection and response mechanisms. In that regard, the Group of Friends is pleased to report that members of the African Women Leaders Network initiative are being proactive on the ground in that direction by providing health services, psychological support, legal aid, economic opportunities and other forms of support to victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflict.

Fourthly, protection, relief and rehabilitation efforts must be complemented by the urgent creation of an enabling environment for women's participation and leadership in prevention, peace, security and governance processes.

Lastly, the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network wishes to stress the need for zero-tolerance in dealing with incidence of sexual violence in conflict, as they constitute a violation of human rights and a crime under international humanitarian and human rights law.

While it is widely acknowledged that perpetrators must be held accountable, criminal accountability in the face of those violations remains elusive, with little chance for survivors to see their offenders face justice. Victims' fear of reprisals and rejection, as well as a lack of access to justice systems and other structural barriers to reporting, should not be underestimated and must be addressed.

The Group of Friends urges Governments to reinforce the capacity of their justice and security sectors to deal effectively with these challenges, working in close partnership with community and faith-based organizations. We advocate the sensitization of national security agencies and an increase in the representation of women. In addition, gender-sensitive transitional justice should be an integral part of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Santos Maraver (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union, as well as the statement just delivered by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network.

In the open debate on 11 April (see S/PV.8508), we emphasized that the women and peace and security agenda is, for Spain, one of the main axes of the Council's work. Today, we wish to reiterate that message further.

Spain is a pioneer in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and its fundamental pillars of participation, prevention and protection. Participation reaffirms the principle that a lasting solution to a conflict is only possible with the effective and full participation of women. With prevention and protection, we seek to prevent sexual violence and the exploitation of women, as well as guarantee reparation to survivors and move forward in the fight against impunity.

Moreover, violence impacts women's access to basic social services and the enjoyment of their rights, especially their sexual and reproductive rights. Together, we must continue to make progress in investigating cases of sexual violence in conflict and holding perpetrators to account in order to achieve effective prevention and a strong, survivor-centred response.

In that regard, Spain strongly supports the work of the German presidency on that issue in their efforts to achieve the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), which includes elements of great importance such as accountability and drawing attention to cases of sexual violence against men and boys. However, Spain regrets the fact that resolution 2467 (2019) does not reflect the need to provide assistance to survivors, through non-discriminatory and comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health, as stated in resolution 2106 (2013), the text of which we consider to be fully relevant and a key reference point for the women and peace and security agenda.

Spain will continue to financially support initiatives to combat sexual violence in conflict and will take gender indicators into account in the process of earmarking funds. We also support the International Committee of the Red Cross special programme to combat sexual violence, as reflected in the Humanitarian Action Strategy of the Spanish Cooperation for the period 2019-2026. We ask the Security Council to

include sexual violence in its sanctions regimes, as we believe it is crucial to ensure interaction between the sanctions committees and the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict.

In a month's time, Spain will hold the third Conference on Safe Schools in Palma de Mallorca, which will address the gender impact of attacks on access to education, as girls and women are especially vulnerable to such attacks. We believe that women and peace and security and safe schools are intimately linked with each other. Spain strongly supports the Safe Schools Declaration, which is a useful instrument to facilitate safe access to education. It is also a fundamental element for the effective participation of women in public life and the eradication of gender violence. We therefore urge the entire international community to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

Furthermore, I reiterate my Government's invitation to all Member States to participate in the Third Conference on Safe Schools. Our goal is for the Conference to serve as a driving force for further developments. In that context, we demand that parties to conflicts put an end attacks on schools, universities, students and teachers, which result in an increased risk of sexual violence.

We wish to see the adoption of concrete national deterrence measures against the use of schools by armed forces and armed groups, which also increases the risk of sexual violence against students and teachers. We would like disaggregated data on cases of sexual violence impacting access to education, as a form of prevention, mitigation and accountability.

In conclusion, Spain will continue to fight against sexual violence in conflict as part of our efforts to eradicate gender-based violence everywhere. Prevention begins in times of peace, with robust national legislation that has a clear deterrent effect. Those same legal instruments must allow for effective reparation for survivors, as well as prosecute and sentence those responsible. Our ultimate goal is to eradicate gender-based violence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Ms. Kadare (Albania): Albania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. I wish to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

I would like to thank Germany for its leadership on the women and peace and security agenda and for convening this important debate. I would also like to thank the briefers from civil society, who bring perspectives from the reality on the ground perspective to this Chamber.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a grave human rights violation and a security challenge that is certainly as destructive as any weapon. It inflicts unimaginable suffering, endangers families and communities and erodes social and political stability. In the pervasive way in which it impedes reconciliation and undermines the prospect of peace and reconstruction, sexual abuse is among the worst of crimes. The landmark adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) created a strong global normative framework and triggered an important paradigm shift. Sexual violence in armed conflict is now clearly considered to be a threat to international peace and security.

Yet, despite greater political will and efforts, progress is slow and conflict-related sexual violence has not diminished. Putting an end to impunity, which continues to be the norm, is a priority. The message that we send today should be clear: there must be zero tolerance for rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict. In addition, Member States should also implement policies that redirect the stigma from victims to perpetrators.

We also recognize the important role that civil society and women's organizations play in documenting abuses and providing survivor-centred responses. A good example of that is the partnership of Justice Rapid Response with UN-Women to ensure criminal justice and accountability for sexual violence.

In September 2018, the Albanian Government approved its first national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). The national action plan aims to integrate the gender perspective into our national, foreign and security policy, providing a comprehensive legal framework to promote and increase women's participation in political and public life, as well as in the security sector. Particular attention has been paid to mainstreaming a gender-sensitive approach in the training of civil, police and military personnel, with a special focus on prevention and response to sexual violence.

I come from a region that, in its recent past, has witnessed first-hand the devastating legacy of sexual

violence being used as a tactic of war. Here, I would like to mention the case of Kosovo, where rape targeting civilians was deliberately and repeatedly used as a weapon during the war of the late 1990s. More than 20,000 survivors are still suffering the consequences in silence, isolated by stigma, discrimination and fear. They have to struggle with social ostracism, physical and psychological damage and emotional torment. Despite substantial evidence, not a single case of war-related sexual violence has been prosecuted.

We regret that the current report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280) continues to fail to list Kosovo among the post-conflict countries that are suffering the consequences of sexual crimes, and we call upon the Secretary-General to include Kosovo in his future reports. That would help to acknowledge the survivors and combat the prejudice and shame that they face. It would also highlight Kosovo's valuable experience in supporting them as a good example in the region and beyond.

It is our collective responsibility to closely cooperate and take concrete actions to prevent sexual violence, protect survivors and bring perpetrators to justice. Albania fully supports the Secretary-General's recommendations in his report, as well as resolution 2467 (2019), presented by Germany and just adopted, and remains committed to playing its part in implementing the resolution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mr. Necula (Romania): First, I would like to present our heartfelt condolences to the people of Sri Lanka following the attacks on Sunday, which Romania strongly condemns. Our thoughts and prayers go to the families of the victims.

Romania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. We would now like to add a few remarks in our national capacity.

At the outset, allow us to commend the presidency of the Security Council for its initiative to host this open debate on women and peace and security and conflict-related sexual violence. We salute the presence of the two Nobel Peace Prize laureates, Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege, and of the human rights lawyer and the activist who are committed to putting an end to sexual violence and related crimes as weapons of

war. Their tireless efforts to speak and act against abominable practices targeting women and girls who are affected by conflicts should be an inspiration as we collectively strive to achieve international peace and security.

The scourge of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict must be brought to an end. Those terrible tactics of war take a toll not only women and girls, but on whole communities, leaving both visible and invisible permanent scars for many future generations. The enslavement and trafficking of victims provide a source of financing to terrorist cells and other culprits, enabling the continuation of abominations, while the stigmatized and marginalized children born of war rape are particularly vulnerable to being recruited from a very young age by armed groups, thereby maintaining a circle of perpetual violence and insecurity.

As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280) shows, facts such as underreporting and the prevalence of non-State actors as principal perpetrators are considerably impacting on the success of efforts to fight against those crimes, altogether weakening the confidence of victims that they will ever receive the appropriate reparations.

The United Nations community and all Member States ought to direct their attention to identifying and holding offenders accountable, seeking justice, compensation and psychosocial support for victims and, last but certainly not least, enabling survivors to testify against such terrible gender-based violence and harmful practices. We particularly commend the key role played by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in that regard. As a court of last resort whose jurisdiction is complementary to that of States, the ICC plays a determining part in fighting against impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern, including in cases of conflict-related sexual violence.

We are deeply concerned about the shrinking space for civil society and its negative impact on the capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts and to build and maintain peace and security. Intimidation and reprisals against women peace activists, humanitarians and relief workers and women human rights defenders are truly worrisome. Their work and support for victims of conflict-related sexual violence is often the only type of assistance that the afflicted persons get, and we should contribute to enabling them to continue providing their essential services, including by giving them greater

visibility in the public space, which is long overdue for those women.

As a candidate country for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2020-2021, Romania pledges to focus on providing support to the most vulnerable groups afflicted by violence and hostilities, including to the victims of conflict-related sexual violence, and to work together with all relevant governmental, humanitarian and civil society partners towards their destigmatization, reinclusion and full participation in peacebuilding efforts.

Women's presence in peacekeeping operations often proves to be key in building trust and developing positive relationships and solid cooperation with the afflicted local communities, especially in the ranks of the most vulnerable groups, including those likely to be subjected to sexual violence. The image of women as protectors is often associated with reassurance and empathy, and their ability to fill this gap in the needs of the communities they serve is a major asset. Romania proudly has seven female officers participating in peace operations at the present time.

As we work towards the adoption of a national action plan on women and peace and security, we are devoting special attention to creating awareness and equipping all military personnel to be deployed in peace operations with knowledge and relevant skills on gender-related issues, as well as to ensuring compliance with the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians and those enshrined in the United Nations voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

Today, we are honoured to be presenting a series of commitments that Romania has decided to assume in the perspective of next year's twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) at the special high-level event organized in the margins of this meeting. As always, we are ready to do our best and deliver our most to advance the women and peace and security cause.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank Germany for organizing this open debate. Uruguay aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the representatives of Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women,

Peace and Security, and of the State of Qatar, on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

Today's speakers have depicted a tragic and devastating state of affairs. Sexual violence, which is perpetrated by non-State armed groups and Government forces, continues to prevail in conflict situations and is often systematically used as a tactic of war and terrorism. Sadly, despite efforts, it has not been possible to stamp out that crime, which violates the most basic principles of human dignity. We must therefore undertake effective action to combat such activity. Resolution 2467 (2019), proposed by Germany, covers a wide range of provisions that will allow for progress against sexual violence and breath a new lease of life into the women and peace and security agenda. That is why Uruguay chose to co-sponsor the resolution.

The most effective way to combat sexual violence in conflict is through prevention. The common denominator of sexual violence is that it finds fertile ground where there are pre-existing patterns of inequality and discrimination. States must therefore take measures to promote respect for victims' rights and foster access to education, work and decision-making processes for women.

Uruguay believes that that requires ongoing efforts to strengthen progress, including by peaceful countries. With that in mind, laws relating to human trafficking, sexual violence and other violations of human rights, as well as the care and reparation of victims, were recently adopted in Uruguay. All of those issues will be included in the next national action plan on women and peace and security, which will also establish new future goals. Moreover, Uruguay will present its tenth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2020.

When prevention fails, it is essential that States equip themselves with effective mechanisms that allow for victim recovery. In particular, they must provide medical assistance that includes comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, such as access to emergency contraception, the safe termination of pregnancy and the prevention and treatment of HIV, as well as psychological care that allows victims to cope with trauma. Programmes for effective reintegration into society must also be provided.

All of those measures need to be victim-centred and address the specific needs of different groups, such as women and girls and men and boys who have

been victims of sexual violence, children born out of war, refugees and stigmatized and marginalized communities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals — a group that is especially susceptible to that type of violence. Accountability is another priority. Governments must exert efforts to strengthen their justice systems and ensure the prosecution of perpetrators, both nationally and internationally, and must promote the reporting of such crimes.

There are very few weapons with the same destructive capacity and devastating effect on social structures as sexual violence. We must therefore address the issue together. States have the primary responsibility to prevent sexual violence, but the seriousness of such crimes, their complex causes and serious and persistent consequences require the support of the international community.

Uruguay values the fundamental role of civil society organizations that help victims and emphatically condemns the threats and attacks perpetrated against them. My country also wishes to express its support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and her dedicated team.

The Security Council, for its part, has a fundamental role to play. It must use all the tools at its disposal to eradicate sexual violence in conflict, ensuring that the topic is examined in its sanctions committees and that they systematically include the names of the perpetrators of such crimes on their lists. It must also refer such cases to the International Criminal Court and include the prevention of those crimes in the mandates of its peace missions.

Uruguay has set an imperative to collaborate with the Security Council as much as possible in order to ensure the proper functioning of peace operations, including troop training before deployment in the areas of human rights and international humanitarian law, with an emphasis on protecting children and on sexual and gender-based violence.

Uruguay is of the view that further concerted action among the various bodies, agencies and mechanisms of the United Nations would be beneficial, within the framework of their respective powers to strengthen research initiatives and ensure accountability.

To conclude, the moving stories of Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege are vivid and first-hand reminders of the reason why we must all fulfil our responsibility to combat sexual violence in all its forms. For every survivor's shocking story, there are many silent stories of anonymous victims who are waiting for us to put an end to those crimes. The time has come to show them that they are not waiting in vain.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Arbeiter (Canada): Let me point out that I have two statements to deliver today. The first will be made on behalf of a group of countries and the second in my national capacity.

I am pleased to speak on behalf of 55 Member States, representing all five regional groups of the United Nations.

On the tenth anniversary of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, we applaud the critical work carried out by Ms. Patten and pledge our full support to her office.

We remain outraged by the persistent and widespread occurrence of sexual violence in armed conflict, committed by State and non-State actors. Sexual violence in conflict is not inevitable and is never acceptable. We underline that a climate of impunity discourages reporting, undermines assistance and abets further violations. Therefore, we are gravely concerned that, despite the systematic use of sexual violence by groups such as Da'esh and Boko Haram, no individuals from such groups have been convicted for sexual violence crimes.

Responsibility for the fight against impunity lies with us, the Member States. Addressing and preventing sexual violence is a core commitment of the women and peace and security agenda. We must 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.

As information is an essential prerequisite for accountability, we support survivor-centred efforts to more systematically document and report sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. In that regard, we urge the Secretary-General to ensure that gender and sexual violence expertise is included in international procedures, such as investigative

mechanisms, commissions of inquiry, United Nations fact-finding missions and Security Council sanctions committees.

We repeat our call on the Security Council to systematically and explicitly incorporate and apply sexual violence as a designation criterion in United Nations sanction regimes, where such crimes are persistently perpetrated. We reaffirm that amnesty should not be granted to perpetrators of sexual violence and that sexual violence should be explicitly prohibited by the terms of ceasefires and peace agreements.

In all our efforts to ensure accountability, we must not lose sight of the needs and rights of survivors of sexual violence in conflict. As a starting point, the United Nations and its Member States should place a greater emphasis on listening to the diverse voices of survivors, as well as collaborating with the civil society organizations working to address sexual violence in armed conflict. That approach helps to empower survivors, identify barriers to assistance and justice, avoid further harm and improve our collective response and accountability.

Sexual violence against men and boys is also an expression of unequal gender norms. Responses must take into account the diverse and intersecting experience, identities and needs of all victims and survivors.

Greater efforts are also needed at all levels to ensure that survivors of sexual violence and children born of rape have access to non-discriminatory and comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial, legal and livelihood support and other multisectoral services, taking into account the specific needs of persons with disabilities and in line with resolution 2106 (2013).

As part of our efforts to secure both accountability and victim support, we want to emphasize the importance of providing reparations to survivors of sexual violence in armed conflict.

Finally, sexual violence in conflict is part of a continuum of violence, including in peacetime, that is fuelled by gender inequality. We believe that systemic gender-based discrimination, such as women's exclusion from political life and economic marginalization, as well as discriminatory legal systems and customs, is conducive to sexual violence in conflict. Any serious effort to prevent and address sexual violence in conflict must move beyond the immediate symptoms and

confront structural inequality itself. Such an approach should include the protection of women human rights defenders, who are themselves the target of attack.

(spoke in French)

I would now like to make a few additional remarks in my capacity as the representative of Canada.

Today's debate is of key importance to my country. Canada's feminist foreign policy puts gender considerations at the core of its global engagement, and the reason is simple. It is because the evidence is irrefutable. Supporting gender equality is the best way to build a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world. Sadly, today the Council's briefers confirmed what we already knew. Sexual and gender-based violence is widespread. Women, girls, LGBTI individuals and other members of marginalized groups are targets. That will change only through concerted efforts. My country is not immune to that scourge. In Canada, the double discrimination that indigenous women and girls endure has increased our levels of sexual and gender-based violence. Within the framework of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which is taking place this week, I want to affirm my Government's strong commitment to addressing the issue.

Just as we seek to prevent sexual and gender-based violence at home, we also support efforts around the world. In Myanmar, we are working with UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund to remove systemic barriers to sexual and reproductive health and rights. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are supporting the work of the United Nations Development Programme in providing survivors of violence with legal, medical and psychosocial support. For the next two years, Canada will lead the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. We are also working to strengthen accountability at the global level. The laws are indeed changing, even if too slowly. In the meantime, the inability of existing national legal frameworks to deal with such crimes in no way diminishes the seriousness of those crimes. In such cases, we therefore believe firmly that we have a collective legal and moral responsibility to act.

(spoke in English)

A lack of political will, including in the Council, should also not enable impunity. The shortcomings of the systems in place should be recognized and addressed and alternative approaches pursued. For example, Canada

is supporting the deployment of experts through UN-Women to secure accountability for sexual and gender-based crimes in Myanmar, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Burundi, Yemen and Mali. Such deployments make a difference. The sexual and gender-based violence experts deployed with Canadian support to the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar directly contributed to a finding that sexual and gender-based violence in Myanmar's Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity. While this work is critical, we know it is not easy. Canada's support for the collection of evidence of crimes by Da'esh in Iraq and Syria has encountered a number of challenges. Survivors and witnesses express legitimate and growing frustrations about the delays in obtaining justice, as well as a sense of psychological fatigue from repeatedly having to share their experiences with media outlets and non-governmental organizations.

International support for investigative bodies documenting sexual violence is key, but we must acknowledge our own responsibilities if we are to prevent the revictimization of survivors. We must all continue to ensure that the voices of victims and their families are fully reflected in our efforts. All victims of sexual and gender-based violence expect action. They expect justice and accountability, and better efforts on prevention. They are right. I would expect the same, and I suspect Council members would too. Resolution 2467 (2019), adopted today, has many important elements, and we commend Germany for its tireless efforts. However, we are disappointed that it is silent on at least two counts. We urge the Council to explicitly recognize that LGBTI individuals are targets of sexual violence in conflict owing specifically to their sexual orientation or gender identity. That persecution is nothing new. Homosexuals, branded with pink triangles by the Nazis and pushed off buildings by Da'esh, have always been targeted. Situations of armed conflict magnify underlying discrimination against LGBTI individuals, which can be manifested through sexual violence. While such persecution is unfortunately long-standing, what is new is the growing expectation of concrete action. As my colleague from Uruguay just pointed out, greater efforts are needed to monitor and report on such violence and ensure that Member States strengthen their national legislation to protect LGBTI victims.

Canada also very much regrets that consensus could not be reached on a reference in the resolution

to sexual and reproductive health rights. The Security Council should not be backtracking on conclusions that it has itself reached in recent years. One step forward cannot involve two steps back. To be clear, sexual and reproductive health rights are essential to women's autonomy and human rights. That is as true now as it was when the Council considered the issue previously. We cannot promote gender equality, address sexual violence in conflict or implement a survivor-centred approach without ensuring sexual and reproductive health rights.

Should Canada be elected to serve on the Council as a non-permanent member for the period from 2021 to 2022, we will be deeply committed to continuing to advance this agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Verdier (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would particularly like to thank your country, Mr. President, for convening today's debate.

Argentina aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, and I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

At the outset, we welcome the positive efforts that States, the United Nations, intergovernmental organizations and local and international civil society have made in recent years to prevent and respond to sexual violence. In that regard, Argentina welcomes the Council's adoption just a few minutes ago of resolution 2467 (2019). However, we regret the text's shortcomings on some matters of importance to my country.

Argentina continues to strongly support the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We welcome the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2019/280) and fully share his recommendations that all State and non-State parties make specific commitments aimed at preventing and combating conflict-related sexual violence, while also strengthening prevention by supporting efforts designed to ensure criminal responsibility for perpetrators and access to justice for survivors. The increasing use and threats of sexual violence by various State and non-State armed actors and groups against particular groups are deeply serious international crimes that must be prevented

and sanctioned within a strict legal framework that makes use of existing tools and mechanisms, including the Security Council's sanctions regimes, which should include sexual violence as a specific criterion for imposing sanctions and referring cases to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

We believe that one of the key ways to prevent sexual violence is by addressing the risk factors and underlying conditions that put women and various other groups in particularly vulnerable situations, while actions and efforts aimed at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in all their diversity are equally important.

With regard to access to justice and accountability for crimes of sexual violence, it is crucial to promote greater cooperation and exchanges of good practices in research and legal assistance. Argentina is a member of the Justice Rapid Response international cooperation mechanism, which does important work in investigating international crimes professionally and impartially. We highly value that mechanism's partnership with UN-Women, which ensures the inclusion of gender specialists in the investigation of crimes.

At the national level, in 2009, we adopted a comprehensive protection law to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women. In 2016, we launched a national action plan for prevention, assistance and the eradication of violence against women, which reflected the resolute will of the executive branch to establish as State policy the fulfilment of the right of all persons to live a life free from violence. At the international level, we reiterate our commitment to the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations with regard to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. In that regard, together with more than 80 countries, we joined the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore the important role of the Safe Schools Declaration, which is an initiative led by Norway and Argentina. We invite States to endorse that non-binding instrument, which recognizes the various obstacles that affect education during armed conflicts and establishes commitments to improving the protection provided to students, educational institutions and their staff.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): I would like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the topic of sexual violence in conflict. I would also like to thank Germany for its strong commitment in support of the women and peace and security agenda.

I thank all the briefers for their riveting, detailed and comprehensive briefings. My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by Ms. Fatima Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the Africa Union (AU) to the United Nations, as well as that of the Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada, who spoke on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Secretary-General's most recent report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2019/280) reminds us that, while there has been a paradigm shift in how the Organization and Governments address those crimes, there is much work to be done on the ground. Accountability for those crimes must be guaranteed. As the report of the Secretary-General notes, "accountability remains elusive" (S/2019/280, para. 22). The report further notes that

"[A]cross most countries, victims express reluctance to report their experiences owing to stigma, the fear of reprisal, rejection by their families and communities, and their lack of confidence in judicial and non-judicial responses" (*ibid.*).

That must change. Actionable change, first and foremost, must come from Member States. International and regional organizations must also play a role. Furthermore, civil society organizations can play a guiding role, given their presence on the ground and contact with survivors and perpetrators. A survivor-centred approach must be at the heart of our programmes, interventions and investments. As outlined in the Secretary-General's report, sexual violence results in multiple consequences for survivors and their families. They often require immediate, life-saving health care. Greater efforts also need to be made to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities.

The African Union has taken a strong stance on sexual violence in conflict and underscored its full commitment to eradicating sexual and gender-based violence on the African continent. In 2018, the AU and

its member States endorsed the African Union Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse for Peace Support Operations. The Policy notably aims to strengthen leadership and management engagement, roles and responses to sexual exploitation and abuse. Member States of the AU have also adhered to a number of instruments developed by the body. That includes the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted in 2003, and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, adopted in 2004. The Women, Gender and Development Directorate and the Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security led the operationalization of those various instruments. On a larger scale, the AU-United Nations partnership, especially in the area of women and peace and security, has contributed to strengthening that partnership and the work in that field.

Within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to be faced with conflict-related sexual violence. The report of the Secretary-General clearly outlines the severity and number of those crimes. In 2018, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) documented 1,049 cases of conflict-related sexual violence. There are no doubt many more cases that have gone unreported. The SADC-deployed Intervention Brigade, under MONUSCO, and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are working together to combat and eradicate sexual violence in conflict, notably with the training of commanders and security officers on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.

In 2008, SADC adopted a Protocol on Gender and Development. The Protocol sets out six specific targets, notably the on need to enact and enforce legislation prohibiting all forms of gender-based violence and the need to ensure that the laws on gender-based violence provide for the comprehensive testing, treatment and care of survivors of sexual assault. The SADC Gender Protocol Barometer is updated annually by the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance and measures the success of those six commitments at the member-State level.

In Namibia, laws on gender-based violence have been strengthened over the years, and a new clinical handbook for survivors subjected to intimate partner violence and/or sexual violence was recently approved

by the Ministry of Health and will be issued for distribution shortly. The publication will be used by medical professionals, social workers, counsellors, law enforcement agencies and others to help and improve services to victims and survivors.

Next year's twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) should spur us to redouble our efforts to strengthen the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence, to promote a survivor-centred concept of justice and accountability, and to address the root causes of those violations. Survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are very often young women and men. They represent the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Mali and many other countries. We must ensure and protect their future to enable them to successfully contribute to the rebuilding of their respective countries.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Stefanile (Italy): We align ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

We welcome today's open debate and thank the briefers for their interventions. We are pleased to see the continuous engagement of the Security Council in addressing sexual violence in conflict and the wider women and peace and security agenda, 10 years after the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We also commend the initiative and efforts of the German presidency that led today to the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019). It represents indeed a further step in countering the scourge of sexual violence in conflict, although, like other Member States, we regret that it was not possible to agree on a more comprehensive and ambitious text.

The issue under discussion today represents a top priority for Italy. In 2017, it was at the core of our mandate on the Security Council and of our presidency of the Group of Seven, and we are committed to devoting our utmost attention to it as we plan further initiatives in view of the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000).

The picture emerging from the 2019 report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280) is, unfortunately, still gloomy. Sexual-related crimes continue to be used as part of a global war strategy by State and non-State actors, and States continue to face setbacks when exercising their responsibility to protect their own nationals. Notwithstanding some progress in some countries, much remains to be done in ensuring accountability, as well as compliance with Security Council resolutions on a wider scale.

In the light of that background, Italy is ready to support the horizontal recommendations set forth by the Secretary-General. In particular, we support the inclusion of sexual violence as an automatic and independent designation criterion in all relevant sanctions regimes. We also 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. When national or international courts are unable to act, the Security Council should create international fact-finding mechanisms in order to conduct gender-sensitive investigations and ensure the collection and preservation of evidence.

Tackling the root causes of violence is indeed key, as the prevention of systematic sexual violence begins in times of peace, when national laws should be made sufficiently robust to prevent permissive attitudes in wartime. We need a paradigm shift based on the dismantlement of those rules, including the patriarchal ones, that are at the base of violence and the affirmation of a full culture of gender equality, which can ensure the complete and effective participation of women and girls in the decision-making process. Our action should be guided by a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach, with the aim of banning any form of gender violence, including harmful practices. Training remains an essential component of our efforts and should encompass a wide range of actors, including youth, leaders, military and police units and civilian personnel.

Establishing a stronger female presence in United Nations missions should also be a priority in order to facilitate dialogue with local populations and encourage victims to speak out and enhance the mandate's delivery, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians. At the same time, it is critical to assist countries in situations of conflict in reforming their judicial systems and strengthening the rule of law

and their accountability mechanisms. Let me recall, in this respect, that Italy will host in Rome in late May the preparatory conference for the review of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

We also concur on the need to provide appropriate reintegration support for the victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. Our commitment in this respect is well-documented, as Italy is the largest contributor to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and supports other initiatives in this area. Last but not least, the involvement of civil society actors is also key to achieving sustainable results, and we have heard a clear reflection of that in the interventions of today's briefers.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Italy's strong commitment to the women and peace and security agenda and, in this context, to the prevention and tackling of sexual violence in conflict. We will continue to support the work of the Secretary-General and of his Special Representative to pursue better and increasingly tangible results in this field.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Fachinotti (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland thanks Germany for its leadership in pursuing and stepping up the fight against sexual violence in conflict within the context of this open debate and next year's twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). In particular, we express our gratitude to this morning's briefers for their outstanding efforts in this area.

Switzerland welcomes the German initiative of introducing resolution 2467 (2019), a new resolution on sexual violence in conflict, which aims to strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms while identifying a survivor-centred approach. Switzerland is concerned, however, about the weakening of agreed language on key issues.

Switzerland reaffirms the primary responsibility of States Members to protect men, women and children from sexual violence and rape. Any response must address as a priority the needs and rights of survivors, the prevention of violations and abuse and the accountability of the perpetrators of such crimes. Three aspects are of particular importance to us.

First, sexual violence is not only a feature of contemporary conflicts; it is also foreshadows them.

The higher the rate of sexual violence is in a given society, the more likely it is that violence will be used in conflict situations. Gender inequality and discrimination are at the heart of sexual violence. Combating that scourge therefore requires the inclusion and empowerment of women, the protection of women human rights defenders and the willingness of men to create a climate of mutual trust and respect.

Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that, while women and girls are the main targets of sexual violence in conflict, men and boys are also victims of those terrible acts of violence, but the subject remains taboo. Cases of violence against men and boys are rarely reported, as those who have been subjected to such acts are even more fearful of being stigmatized and excluded. Given such gender stereotypes as "a man can be only a hero, but never a victim", it is difficult if not impossible to break the cycle of silence and revictimization.

We therefore advocate a holistic approach to caring for the victims of sexual violence, including children born as the result of rape. We must ensure that any response focuses on the rights and needs of all survivors, including their sexual and reproductive health rights and that they are treated with dignity and respect. Any response must encompass medical and psychosocial services, while at the same time facilitating and strengthening the reintegration of survivors into their communities and social structures.

Thirdly, Switzerland is concerned about the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of sexual violence in national and international conflicts. In particular, we support the efforts of the International Criminal Court and its Prosecutor to ensure that the perpetrators of sexual and gender-related crimes are held accountable for their actions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Let me express my appreciation to the German presidency for holding this open debate. I would also like to thank Special Representative Pramila Patten and the representatives of civil society for their moving testimonies.

It is worth mentioning that Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Unfortunately, almost 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), not all the objectives of the women and peace and security agenda have been achieved. The tragic reality of sexual violence against men, women, girls and boys continues to constitute a part of the fabric of each and every armed conflict around the globe, regardless of whether it is internal or external in nature. Since the establishment of the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict 10 years ago, the Security Council has adopted five resolutions focused, first and foremost, on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.

Nevertheless, the issue continues to plague vulnerable communities and, often times, entire societies, which are exposed to all kinds of violence and abuse in conflicts. It is therefore imperative that the international community and the Security Council in particular continue to look for the most effective ways to enhance the implementation of the existing resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda in order to tackle and prevent atrocities from being committed, as well as ensure accountability.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280) before us today clearly indicates that structural gender inequalities and discrimination are at the core of conflict-related sexual violence. In that regard, we proceed from the conviction that the path towards the prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls lies first in the genuine empowerment of women and their greater engagement at all levels of decision-making processes. Equally important is the task of guaranteeing the victims of sexual violence the right to justice and live in peace and dignity, free from stigmatization and any form of discrimination. Impunity for those crimes is rust on the moral image of any society and should be eradicated.

Ukraine attaches great importance to the equal and full participation of women in all activities in the areas of national security, conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Practical steps are being taken to integrate the women and peace and security agenda into the ongoing security and defence reform in my country. The active integration of gender equality into the activities of the armed forces of Ukraine, within the framework of the national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) for the period 2016-2022, has fostered changes to the

list of military specializations and positions open to women candidates.

In 2018, the Government of Ukraine updated the national action plan and integrated some aspects of the strategy for the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine. The action plan, *inter alia*, includes education and training programmes for the security sector on prevention, protection and response aspects; psychological assistance and a rehabilitation programme for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence; and an information campaign on the prevention of sexual violence.

For the first time, the Government action plan for 2018 outlined the priority of introducing gender advisers and gender mainstreaming in higher education institutions in the security and defence sector. The Government of Ukraine has enhanced its efforts to ensure the protection of women's human rights and women's empowerment in all spheres of public life, as well as the necessary support for, and reintegration of, women victims who have suffered from sexual violence as a result of the Russian aggression.

In that light, I must once again reiterate our regret at the omission of the reference to the Ukrainian-Russian armed conflict and its victims in the Secretary-General's latest thematic report (S/2019/280). In that regard, we would like to recall our request for a United Nations special mission to investigate sexual crimes committed in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in the context of that conflict.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Ukraine's commitment to ensuring the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, promoting women's rights and protecting women from sexual and gender-based violence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I am making this statement on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country Norway. I thank Germany for organizing today's open debate on this critical topic.

With the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019) today, it is essential to advance the agenda of conflict-related sexual violence by focusing on the survivors. Let us emphasize that the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence deserve basic sexual and reproductive health and rights. We regret that sexual and reproductive

health and rights, as reaffirmed by the Security Council in several of its resolutions, most recently in resolutions 1889 (2009) and 2106 (2013), were not included.

Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege bring with them the voices of the very people we are here to serve and whose communities the Security Council is meant to safeguard. As we acknowledge once again that the devastating harm that those women, girls, men and boys have been exposed to is a matter of national and international security, they are here to hold us accountable.

Girls become mothers and children become stateless. Women are raped and their husbands are forced to watch. Reproductive organs are mutilated and shame and stigma paralyse families and villages. Those injuries of war call for a comprehensive response. Sexual violence destroys lives, tears apart the social fabric of communities, creates rifts between neighbours and preys on the differences that enrich our societies. Those who are targeted are often discriminated against due to their religious, ethnic, sexual, political or other minority status.

It has been ten years now since the mandate of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict was established. Ms. Wallström, Ms. Bangura and Ms. Patten have done an excellent job, not least through United Nations Action and the Team of Experts; yet, in many conflicts, abuse is still widespread. We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/280), which indicates possible ways forward.

We must monitor and document violations of international law and provide training and funding, where needed. We need to strengthen State institutions and build our capacity to combat conflict-related sexual violence. Individual States have the primary responsibility of preventing and responding to sexual violence, as well as investigating and prosecuting persons implicated in such crimes. Perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence must be held to account.

We call for the systematic use of gender expertise in United Nations operations. We welcome the dedicated specialized teams, the new policy and the soon-to-be-launched all-of-mission handbook on the prevention of, and response to, conflict-related sexual violence. We echo the need for resolutions, mandates and sanctions to address conflict-related sexual violence.

Root causes of gender-based violence, such as gender-based power inequalities and gender-based discrimination, must be addressed. Responsive measures, such as providing adequate services to the survivors of gender-based violence, are crucial, as are measures to prevent the violence from happening in the first place. We support the call to action to end sexual violence in conflict. We rely on survivors and witnesses, civil society and human rights defenders as we strive to build a relevant and effective response without causing survivors further pain.

Reparation and justice must go hand in hand. A comprehensive approach is a prerequisite to alleviate both the immediate and long-term impacts of conflict-related sexual violence. We must strengthen services for survivors of sexual violence, including by ensuring comprehensive sexual and reproductive health rights, such as access to emergency contraception and the safe termination of pregnancies. We must fight impunity, remove stigma, alleviate suffering, rectify injustices and, ultimately, help people to rebuild their lives and help communities to build peace. In that context, we emphasize the significant progress made by the International Criminal Court and its Trust Fund for Victims in combating conflict-related sexual violence.

The Nordic countries will do our part through our embassies, multilateral efforts and many partnerships. The Nordic Women Mediators network calls for more gender-transformative peace and reconciliation processes. The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations equips peacekeepers. We deploy many women and men who champion that cause. This anniversary year demands action.

Norway, together with Somalia, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Population Fund, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other partners, will host a conference in Oslo on 23 and 24 May. The objectives are to mobilize more political awareness and financial support to address conflict-related sexual violence in humanitarian crises and highlight best practices to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian situations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Fiji.

Mr. Prasad (Fiji): I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to address members of the Council.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening an open discussion on sexual violence in conflict during your joint presidency. Fiji congratulates the Security Council on its adoption of resolution 2467 (2019) against sexual violence earlier today.

Since 2000, there have been several resolutions on combating sexual violence in conflict. Those resolutions highlight that women are subjected to the most inhumane and systematic torture, rape and abuse during conflicts, which often continue well after peace settlements have been secured. Some of those, as told forcefully this morning by the brave Nobel Laureate Ms. Nadia Murad, have occurred within the broader context of genocide as well — they are all war crimes regardless.

The Secretary-General briefed the Security Council that in spite of a more robust normative framework, there has been an onset of an epidemic of targeted sexual violence in conflicts. Rape, sexual violence and slavery have become systematic weapons of war across so many of the world's conflicts. The perpetrators of these crimes, largely against women, go mostly unpunished. All of those victims remind us of how far we need to travel.

I draw the Security Council's attention to the special role that peace operations can play in addressing what the Special Representative this morning called history's greatest silence — an epidemic of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Special skills and resources are required by peace operations if they are to combat and prevent sexual violence in conflict. Fiji, a long-serving contributor to United Nations peacekeeping, is upscaling its peacekeeping contingents. We are significantly increasing the number of women peacekeepers because we know that women peacekeepers bring with them empathy. Women peacekeepers are far better at understanding patterns of sexual violence in conflict. Women peacekeepers are better at identifying signs of systematic sexual violence early. Women in medical support units help overcome deep barriers that victims of sexual violence face in accessing medical help, trauma counselling and in seeking other support.

Peace operations are an important part of the international response. Fiji is making progress in improving its preparedness for peace operations, with the support of Australia, New Zealand and other partners. Our approach is not only about getting more women into peacekeeping; it is about ensuring that all

peacekeepers have the soft skills to recognize signs of sexual violence in conflict early, that they are able to record evidence and work across the United Nations system to support victims. The focus must always be on support for the victims first.

Fiji has learned a lot from our experiences across peace operations in Timor-Leste, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Lebanon, Darfur in the Sudan, South Sudan and other regions. Those experiences have drawn our attention to the pressing need for peacekeepers to prepare far better in order to respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

During conflict, law and order is the first to suffer. Women thus have little recourse to governance institutions; they suffer violence without being able to access their own national or local institutions. Major conflicts around the world share an important character — the growing brutality of systemic sexual violence. The most recent experience of Yazidi women, which Ms. Nadia Murad personified this morning, is a testimony to that.

In recognizing the bravery of Ms. Nadia Murad and the determination and perseverance of Dr. Denis Mukwege, the Nobel Committee has helped to draw international attention to this growing tragedy. The Security Council needs to do its part. The United Nations system as a whole needs to play its part. It was more than 10 years ago that the Council adopted resolution 1820 (2008), recognizing sexual violence as a weapon and tactic of war. Rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime and a crime against humanity. As the Secretary-General informed us this morning, in spite of a strong normative framework the facts on the ground have not changed much.

By sharing their experiences with us, Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege inspire us to act. Their ask is simple. The United Nations needs to respond to what Ms. Amal Clooney said in her briefing to the Council this morning. We are facing an epidemic of sexual violence in conflict. Justice is the antidote. United Nations peace operations need to have the strongest possible emphasis on the protection of civilians in their mandate. The prevention of sexual violence must be given absolute priority within enhanced peace operations mandates. That must be explicit. It cannot be an optional extra.

If peace operations are mandated to explicitly prevent sexual violence, they should be resourced to

be successful. Expecting peace operations to do more and more with less and less is wrong and morally indefensible. If peace operations are to be strong enough to prevent systemic sexual violence, peacekeepers should possess the skills and the resources. Those include specialized medical support for victims of sexual violence in conflict, access to safe areas and especially support across the United Nations system. Missions must be able to record and document sexual violence. Resourcing peace operations sufficiently will make them fit for purpose in responding to conflicts where sexual violence is increasingly becoming a weapon of war.

The Security Council needs to bring systematic sexual violence into its sanctions regime. Evidence and documentation are so vital to that. Systematic sexual violence often continues well into the post-conflict phase. Nothing makes the case for women to be at the peace table more powerfully than that. Women need to be in peace processes, at the peace table and in all phases of peacebuilding.

This morning all the briefers told us about the urgent need for a resolute international response. Resolution 2467 (2019), just adopted by the Council, is a great step forward. The United Nations system as a whole can and must go much further. We must be on the right side of history.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Greece.

Mrs. Theofili (Greece): At the outset I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on convening this highly relevant and timely debate, as well as the Franco-German joint presidencies for bringing to the fore the women and peace and security agenda.

Greece welcomes the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019) today and aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union. Please allow me to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

During the past decade, the international community has witnessed the systematic use of sexual violence by State and non-State actors as tactics of war and terrorism — that is to say, as part of a broader strategy of warfare that poses serious threats to international peace and security. Conflict-related crimes against sexual freedom and determination — most often perpetrated against, but not limited to, women and girls — are deeply rooted in and exacerbated by gender

stereotypes and discriminatory perceptions of gender roles that cumulatively result in gender inequalities that are usually of a structural nature within societies. In that vein, efforts to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence should be collective, focusing on the accountability of the perpetrators, as well as on the empowerment of the surviving victims. Therefore, political will to try or extradite alleged perpetrators, as well as to enhance effective and timely international judicial cooperation in criminal matters, is of paramount importance.

Additionally, comprehensive education, capacity-building and awareness-raising on the particular aspects of conflict-related sexual violence and its frequent use as a tactic of war and terrorism are deemed to be extremely beneficial in order to end impunity. Needless to say, such efforts should place particular focus on the engagement of men and boys as agents of gender-sensitive, peaceful change. A holistic perspective of justice and accountability mechanisms calls for a survivor-centred strategic approach to fight against conflict-related sexual violence. In doing so the international community and States should encourage voices coming from civil society and women's organizations, including grass-roots organizations.

A survivor-centred approach should incorporate a robust gender perspective, coherently mainstreamed across the whole spectrum of activities at the national, regional and international levels. To that end, Greece recently adopted a law on the promotion of substantial gender equality, and the prevention and combating of gender-based violence. The law calls for a whole-of-Government approach to gender mainstreaming in order to integrate a gender culture in public governance and administration, including the justice sector. In that regard, Greece is currently in the process of drafting its national action plan on women, peace and security, which coherently brings together all aspects of its relevant national policies.

In conclusion, Greece reiterates its readiness to cooperate constructively with the United Nations institutions and Member States in fighting conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and in working towards the enhancement of substantial gender equality — that is to say, the equality of all human beings — so that no one is left behind.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Vaultier Mathias (Portugal): I would like to thank the German presidency of the Security Council for convening today's open debate on this very important issue.

Portugal aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and with that delivered earlier by the representative of Canada on behalf of 55 countries.

Portugal greatly values that the Council continues to pay attention to and acts upon the women and peace and security agenda, an essential tool for preventing conflict and ensuring more effective responses to today's complex crises. We fully agree that we need to do more to prevent sexual violence in conflict. In that sense, we commend today's adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), with its survivor-centred approach that helps shift the stigma of sexual violence from the victims to the perpetrators, as well as the fact that the resolution addresses the importance of prevention to the great challenges faced by women and girls, in particular, sexual violence in conflict. Moreover, we need to ensure that victims of violence, including sexual violence, have the right to protection and reparation, and that the perpetrators are held accountable.

Portugal has been implementing resolution 1325 (2000) since the development of our first national action plan, in 2009. In this regard, allow me to highlight that our third national action plan — for the term 2019-2022 — includes a strategic goal to protect the human rights of women and girls and punishes all forms of violence against them, including sexual violence. Within this goal, our target is to integrate the women and peace and security agenda and gender equality, including violence against women and girls, sexual violence and human trafficking, into our legal and judicial cooperation in the context of implementing resolution 2106 (2013). We also seek to promote and support all activities related to investigation and punishment of all cases of violations against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations and humanitarian crises.

Accordingly, we recognize that the promotion of gender-equality and non-discrimination perspectives within the various fields of public policy and development cooperation is imperative if we are to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone. Furthermore, we consider it to be of the utmost importance enhancing

training to military- and security-forces personnel on issues related to human rights, international humanitarian law, gender equality and violence against women and girls, including on sexual violence and gender-based violence, not the least of which is the institutionalization of gender advisers in all branches of the armed forces.

In conclusion, let me underline that preventing sexual violence in conflict is possible only if all stakeholders are involved in finding durable solutions. In this regard, it is essential to work closely with civil society, as was underlined by our distinguished briefers this morning. In fact, civil society organizations often play an instrumental role in ensuring the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, including by complementing the work done by military, security and civilian personnel in conflict and post-conflict settings and in situations of emergency. They are often essential elements in preventing and reporting crimes, alerting the international community to such crimes, restoring the internal stability of the States, supporting the reconstruction of countries and helping the population to recover.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): First, I would like to convey our strong condemnation of the heinous and reprehensible terrorist attacks against worshippers and civilians in Sri Lanka and express our solidarity with the people and the Government of that country.

Next, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important debate and express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his remarks. We commend the work of Special Representative Patten and the valuable efforts of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We also extend our appreciation to our briefers today.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, we acknowledge the progress that has been achieved within the United Nations system in terms of combating sexual violence. The Security Council deserves special credit for connecting the concepts of sexual violence and impunity to international peace and security, passing numerous resolutions and addressing the issue in various meetings. In this respect, we also welcome the adoption today of resolution 2467 (2019), which Turkey

co-sponsored. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General's most recent report to the Council (S/2019/280) reveals the fact that sexual violence continues to be a tactic of war and is widespread, particularly in armed conflicts, including their early stages and in their aftermath. The report also confirms the nexus among sexual violence, human trafficking, terrorism and forced displacement.

Sexual violence has consequences for all affected — women and girls, men and boys. In addition to its devastating impact on survivors, it has a broad and long-lasting effect on communities and States as whole entities for generations. Our responsibility must be to bring justice, recognition and reparations to the survivors of these horrendous crimes. The Secretary-General rightly identifies accountability for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence as a key element of his prevention strategy.

Unfortunately, in conflicts, national judicial and security systems are often paralysed by incapacity, resulting in impunity. The absence of efficient criminal procedures and institutional capacity is common. Even when legislation and institutions are in place, a selective application of laws and lack of accountability often prevails. Accordingly, victims are discouraged from seeking civil remedies and a culture of impunity prevails. To address this problem, comprehensive solutions combining support for the supremacy of the rule of law and building judicial and security institutions should be sought. Gaps in both legislation and implementation must be addressed. Impunity must come to an end for both perpetrators and those at the top of the chain of command.

The punishment of a crime often serves as the most important deterrent. To address sexual violence during conflicts and ensure that these crimes can be prosecuted in the post-conflict phase, necessary documentation and evidence must be gathered while the conflict is ongoing. The United Nations, other international organizations, humanitarian agencies and civil society have an important task in this respect. We welcome the establishment and the ongoing work of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria, the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh. International justice mechanisms are essential, particularly when sexual violence in the form of systematic rape and forced pregnancies is used as a tactic of war. Their work complements those of national

systems in the fight against the culture of impunity, especially in post-conflict settings.

We concur with the Secretary-General that achieving gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the recognition of their human rights are the essential steps for prevention and addressing impunity. This will also help further our agenda on women and peace and security. Ending violence against women is a part of this effort. The Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, known as the Istanbul Convention, stands out as a landmark document in this regard. Turkey is committed to fostering the objectives of the Convention and stands ready to share its experiences in its implementation.

As the conflict in Syria enters its ninth year, millions of Syrians, particularly women and girls, continue to live under the threat of sexual violence from various parties on the ground. The horrific acts of sexual violence perpetrated by the Syrian regime, especially during arrest, detention and at checkpoints, have been documented in various United Nations reports. As one of Syria's neighbours, and a country with an open-door policy towards the Syrians fleeing war and violence at home, Turkey now hosts over 3.5 million Syrians, 1.6 million of whom are women. Empowering Syrian women and youth and fostering self-reliance in them, with zero tolerance for sexual and gender-based violence, is one of the tenets of our policy, which is why we exert every effort to provide security and safety for them, including through partnerships with United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

The findings on the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar in the Secretary-General's report are once again quite disturbing. The international community expects the Government of Myanmar to create the necessary conditions for peaceful coexistence in Rakhine state and the safe return of refugees. That requires ending all types of violence, including sexual violence; giving humanitarian agencies immediate and unhindered access to populations in need; and implementing international humanitarian and human rights law in Rakhine state.

We acknowledge the signing of the joint communiqué between the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations in December 2018 as a good step in that direction. We expect its full and swift implementation, including the commitments regarding

accountability for conflict-related sexual violence allegedly perpetrated by the Myanmar Armed Forces and border guards. Bringing the alleged perpetrators of sexual and other violence to justice will also be of critical importance to putting an end to that vicious cycle.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our full support for international, regional and national efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence and respond to its consequences.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to thank the presidency of Germany for convening this meeting and welcome the adoption this morning of resolution 2467 (2019), which we co-sponsored.

We cannot tolerate any sexual violence in conflict. Japan has consistently supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We highly appreciate the efforts taken by Special Representative Patten to seek commitments from relevant Governments and parties through tenacious negotiations to end sexual violence in conflict, which have led to a number of frameworks of cooperation and joint communiqués with various Governments and entities.

In order to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict, the international community should strengthen its efforts in the following three areas.

First, ensuring accountability for perpetrators and justice for survivors is key to the prevention and deterrence of future crimes. If perpetrators are not prosecuted or if they still hold power, sexual violence cannot be put to rest, which leads to distrust in the Government. Japan has, since 2014, financially supported the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Somalia and Iraq. The Team of Experts works closely with the Governments of those countries, as well as United Nations missions and country teams, to support investigation and prosecution, legislative reform and capacity-building of judicial and security authorities.

Secondly, taking a survivor-centred approach is important in responding to sexual violence in conflict. Japan believes that the human security approach, which is people-centred, comprehensive and context-specific and focuses on prevention, is valuable in that context. In

that regard, Japan has supported United Nations action projects, including projects that respond to the needs of children born as a result of rape and their mothers in Iraq and that improve access to justice by survivors of sexual violence in Jordan.

Thirdly, in order to prevent and deter sexual violence by addressing its root causes, including gender inequality, we need to boost our efforts to promote gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. We must also acknowledge that women are active peacebuilders and safeguards against violent extremism — they are not just victims of conflict.

In that connection, Japan has supported UN-Women projects in Kenya, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan to promote women's empowerment at the community level through training against violent radicalization and cash-for-work programmes. Those projects encourage women to be confident, active players in protecting their communities from violent extremist influences.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Abe, Japan hosted the fifth World Assembly for Women last month to create a society in which women shine. The participants discussed women's participation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery and recognized that all stakeholders, including Government and civil society, should work together to promote that agenda. As President of the Group of 20 (G-20) this year, Japan will relay the World Assembly for Women discussion to G-20 members at the Osaka summit, at which women's economic empowerment will be one of the topics of discussion.

Since the delegation of the Republic of Korea mentioned the issue of comfort women in his statement earlier, I am obliged to address the issue at this meeting. The Government of Japan has been sincerely dealing with that issue for a long period of time. In addition, as a result of considerable diplomatic efforts, Japan and the Republic of Korea reached an agreement in December 2015. With that agreement, both countries confirmed that the issue of comfort women was resolved finally and irreversibly. It is of great importance that the agreement be steadily implemented by both sides.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): Let me start by commending Germany, as well as France, for their excellent stewardship with regard to the

women and peace and security agenda during the past two months.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of 55 countries.

The pertinent briefings of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative show that addressing that topic is as important today as ever. We applaud their leadership and want to reiterate our full support for Ms. Patten and her mandate. In addition, we wish to express our appreciation for Dr. Denis Mukwege, Ms. Nadia Murad, Ms. Inas Miloud and Ms. Amal Clooney for sharing their experience and expertise on that topic.

Today, I will focus on accountability, addressing, first, the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC); secondly, sanctions; and thirdly, the survivor-centred approach, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

First, enhanced accountability would send a strong and preventative signal to perpetrators and protect the safety and lives of millions of women, girls, men and boys in conflict areas. A coherent accountability approach to conflict-related sexual violence is important and the primary responsibility for accountability rests with the State. When States are unable or unwilling to prosecute, the ICC can play an important role in holding perpetrators accountable. We remind the Council of its power to refer situations, such as the situations in Syria and Myanmar, to the ICC and we call upon States to become a party to the Rome Statute of the ICC.

Secondly, sanctions can contribute to the fight against impunity and be a form of deterrence and prevention. Last October, the Kingdom of the Netherlands initiated an Arria formula meeting, at which the Council discussed ways in which sanctions could contribute to moving from a culture of impunity to a culture of deterrence. Allow me to highlight three main takeaways. They are in line with the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280), which we strongly support.

To start with, the Council should systematically and explicitly incorporate and apply sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion in sanctions regimes. We call upon all Council members to extend that practice to all remaining relevant sanctions regimes

and to ensure adequate follow-up. Furthermore, the cooperation and interaction among sanctions committees, panels and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General should be further strengthened.

It is important for the Council to include sexual violence in its deliberations on country-specific situations. In December, we facilitated the briefing by Special Representative Patten to the Council on sexual violence in Bentiu, South Sudan (see S/PV.8431). Such briefings, as well as briefings to Sanctions Committees, should become the rule rather than the exception. Lastly, the sanctions architecture should be better linked to the findings in the Secretary-General's report, which has the same list of parties as last year's. Where no specific sanctions regimes exist yet, the Council should explore innovative ways to use sanctions following the listings in the annex.

My third point is about the survivor-centred approach. Taking a survivor-centred approach means listening to survivors and respecting their rights, wishes and needs while taking into account their privacy and confidentiality. Sexual violence is aimed at wrecking communities, and it is essential to address survivors' needs if communities are to be rebuilt. To enable survivors to choose freely, we should support them with comprehensive information and services, including those related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, safe abortion and mental health and psychosocial support, as guaranteed by international humanitarian and human rights law. In that regard, we fully support the statement by the representative of France following the vote on resolution 2467 (2019). We should provide survivors with both protection and legal action. I am thinking not only about the survivors of sexual violence in South Sudan whom I mentioned earlier, but also about Yezidi women and girls, and about the Rohingya women and girls I met during the Security Council visit to Bangladesh and Myanmar almost a year ago today. The Security Council has raised expectations and should follow through on them, and justice is at the top of the list. In that regard, we reiterate our full support to the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and to the Myanmar investigative mechanism that will soon start its important work.

In conclusion, I should like to quote Ms. Nadia Murad on her acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize:

“Thank you very much for this honour, but the fact remains that the only prize in the world that can restore our dignity is justice and the prosecution of criminals.”

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I am delivering my remarks on behalf of Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia. We also align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union.

First of all, we should mobilize our efforts to achieve full gender equality in law and in practice. We should address the gender stereotypes that are deeply embedded in society and that often have an unconscious impact on our actions. To counter those stereotypes, women must be able to fully and effectively participate in political, economic and social life. In that context, I would like to commend the initiative of the Framework of Cooperation signed in 2018 between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Secondly, we must focus on accountability. We must admit that despite increased attention from the international community, impunity remains a widespread and even common practice. Sexual violence committed in wartime is one of the least reported crimes. The survivors of violence are often further punished with rejection and stigma. In ensuring accountability, we want to stress the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Rome Statute of the ICC provides the international community with an excellent tool for putting an end to impunity for sexual and gender-based crimes, and we want to encourage all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute and ensure that their national laws fully incorporate the Rome Statute crimes.

Thirdly, we should address the issue of the implementation of existing commitments. We agree with the Secretary-General that there are ways to address the existing gaps in the compliance system and to put those issues on the Security Council's agenda. With regard to our implementation of our own commitments, all three of our countries have taken steps to prepare and advance national action plans on women and peace and security. Latvia is about to start preparing its first

national action plan, which will include action based on domestic policy as well as through multilateral and bilateral cooperation. Lithuania is finalizing its second national action plan for the period from 2020 to 2024, and Estonia is currently working on its third national action plan for the same period, focusing on the empowerment of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations as well as on raising awareness on conflict-related sexual violence.

Estonia is also contributing financially to the activities of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and to the work of the ICC Trust Fund for Victims. Lithuania has been contributing to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which focuses on directly supporting local women's organizations engaged in conflict-affected areas, since it was launched. During its current presidency of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) Latvia has prioritized the issue of arms-related gender-based violence. The ATT makes a critical contribution to global efforts to address gender-based violence affected by the illicit proliferation and misuse of arms, but it is clear that much more work and political will is needed to address this issue, including through arms export assessments.

I would also like to stress the crucial role of civil society, particularly women's organizations, in fighting sexual and gender-based crimes through prevention and evidence-gathering, as well as by providing assistance to survivors. In this connection, Lithuania organized a three-day conference for international experts in November 2018 on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, with the aim of building the capacities and enhancing the abilities of civil-society organizations. Additionally, at a side event organized by Estonia in March during the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Pramila Patten, gave many interesting examples of the technological opportunities that can be used to help survivors. As stigmatization is almost always part and parcel of victimization in sexual violence, it would be interesting to hear any recommendations the Special Representative may have for States on how they can tackle this particular challenge with technological means.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would like to thank Germany for convening today's debate and all the briefers for their powerful statements. I particularly welcome the fact that Pramila Patten, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, whose work we strongly support, is still with us at this stage in the day listening to the debate. I thank her for being here.

As war is fundamentally about power and the abuse of power, so too is sexual violence. Sexual violence is rooted in women's political, social and economic exclusion and insecurity. It is an abuse of power rooted in historical power imbalances, primarily between men and women. To eliminate the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence, our first and most fundamental task must be achieving gender equality at every level. Ireland recently concluded two years as Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), working on precisely that task — progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The debates at the Commission on the Status of Women are as intense and polarized as any here in the Security Council. No one should be under any illusion about the fact that the efforts to balance the power relations between men and women are deeply, deeply political, and today's debate is clearly no less so.

I am proud that the CSW's recent conclusions (E/CN.6/2019/L.3) contain vital language on the need to address the effects of armed conflict and post-conflict situations on women and girls, including victims and survivors of sexual violence. We must keep working, doggedly and with determination, to build the structures, in language and in laws, that can bring an end to sexual violence. Resolution 2467 (2019), adopted today, is a step on the road, but it is only one step, and we share the regret expressed by the representatives of Belgium, France, South Africa, the Netherlands and other countries that the text did not include references to sexual and reproductive health-care services for the victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflict. As the French Ambassador said, that is not the end of the road, and we believe that the Security Council must assume its responsibility and recognize such needs.

We should be mindful too that gender-based violence affects not just women and girls but also men, boys and members of sexual and gender minorities. Poverty, displacement and vulnerability increase the risk of sexual violence, especially for those in flight. We see that dynamic of power and vulnerability playing out again and again.

Gender equality is at the heart of Ireland's foreign, development and humanitarian policies. This year in Ireland we have already increased our funding to preventing gender-based violence in conflict-affected and fragile States by more than one third. Our determination in such work comes not only from conviction but also from lived experience. Northern Ireland lived that experience intensely. For instance, we saw there that the decommissioning of weapons, demobilization of paramilitary groups and growing confidence in the police service greatly reduced the threat of firearms in domestic violence situations. One form of violence stops with the other.

In partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), in 2016 Ireland established the world's first response mechanism dedicated solely to gender-based violence programming. We have seen how a survivor-based response saves the lives of women and girls every day. Our support has helped survivors such as Nyamal, one of millions displaced in South Sudan as conflict swept through her village. Nyamal was separated from her family and in the chaos that followed she was gang-raped. She was able to access a safe space for women and girls, where she received psychosocial support and medical services. But for Nyamal, like millions of other survivors, the impact and trauma of sexual violence endured, including through social stigma. After she discovered she was pregnant, Nyamal was rejected by her family. When the baby was born, the IRC worked with local women leaders, who intervened in Nyamal's family and she was eventually reintegrated. The example of Nyamal demonstrates not just the complexity and deep impact of sexual violence but also how addressing harmful, embedded cultural norms play an important role in recovery. Support to Nyamal would not have been possible without working with a local partner. We must do everything we can to increase our support to local organizations and to work with civil society, in particular human rights defenders.

In our peacekeeping work, Ireland is also proactive. As seasoned peacekeepers, our defence forces regularly conduct patrols with mixed gender teams around camps where young women and girls are collecting firewood or water. It is a small practical example of the kind of gender-sensitive approach that should be integrated at every level of our work. This year, Ireland will conduct training for peacekeeping contingents in the investigation of conflict-related sexual and gender-

based violence for the African Union, the United Nations and NATO partners.

We provide support to mechanisms such as the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism in Syria and for the work of Justice Rapid Response in ensuring that gender expertise be made available in the investigation of serious human rights violations. We also strongly support efforts by the Security Council to bolster the use of conflict-related sexual violence as a criterion for imposing sanctions and for greater alignment across thematic and country-specific sanctions regimes.

Put simply, the horrific scale of ongoing conflict-related sexual violence is a stain on our common humanity. We have to close the accountability gap with determination and with unashamed zero tolerance. For our part, as an aspiring elected member of the Security Council for the period 2021-2022, Ireland will continue to work for gender equality and aim to break down the power imbalances we see as being at the heart of such violence. We will support bringing that agenda again to this table.

We are listening carefully to survivors about their needs, which naturally include sexual and reproductive health-care services. We want to see women in all aspects of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It is there that we as women belong and where we will make a difference if we are allowed to get on with the task.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Mardini: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate and all the briefers for their compelling interventions and courageous dedication.

In the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with affected communities in armed conflict, sexual violence has been highlighted as a top concern by young women in particular. Other groups have named it among their major fears alongside community tensions, loss of means and displacement.

Political attention on sexual violence has been raised to the highest levels. The burning question now is how it can compel a collective response, focusing on the affected population, including those at risk of sexual violence.

On behalf of the ICRC, a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organization, today I wish to outline three levels where there are challenges and opportunities to work together among States, humanitarian actors and other partners.

First, at the level of victims and survivors, there is a lack of support in addressing medical care, mental health, shelter, economic insecurity and exclusion. We ask those present in their respective capacities to support such needs and the acceptance of survivors. One concrete request we have is to provide safe and confidential access to health care to prevent further risks to survivors who come forward.

For our part, at the level of victims and survivors, the ICRC supports health centres in the Central African Republic and Mali through training, financial and technical assistance.

Secondly, at the community level, we see challenges stemming from the lack of information on available services, deterioration of safety leading to an increased risk of sexual violence, and harmful coping strategies for protection or income generation. We request support for risk reduction. We ask for support for social cohesion among community members or for economic means as alternatives to harmful coping strategies.

For the ICRC's part, in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria the communities themselves identify problems, causes, consequences and capacities. Guided by the communities, as experts of their own situation, we work hand in hand with them on the solutions they propose to reduce risk exposure.

Thirdly, at the State and institutional level, we see challenges arising from the inadequate criminalization of sexual violence and a lack of State and local capacity to respond. Weak chains of command, poor judicial systems and ineffective measures to reduce sexual violence in detention create further obstacles.

Together, we must create and safeguard a humanitarian environment that prevents sexual violence. That is possible by establishing adequate normative frameworks, building the capacity of judicial bodies and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and other bodies of law. The 1949 Geneva Conventions were the first treaties to prohibit rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict.

For our part, the ICRC will continue to engage with all parties to armed conflict to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. We will continue to lend technical expertise to lawmakers and military officials and to support structures to address sexual violence, including in detention.

Let us work together to respond on those three levels — victim/survivor, community and State. As we mark the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions this year, let us also recall its spirit to uphold human dignity in the midst of armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Marinaki.

Ms. Marinaki: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union (EU) welcomes the Franco-German joint presidency's determination to bring the women and peace and security agenda into the limelight of the Council and the international community at large. This is in line with the initiatives implemented by other EU member States during their recent mandates in the Council. The adoption today of resolution 2467 (2019), on conflict-related sexual violence, is a positive step forward and we are fully committed to playing our part in its full implementation.

Allow me to extend our gratitude to today's briefers, whose actions and commitment are an inspiration to all of us. On this tenth anniversary of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, we also thank Special Representative Pramila Patten for her dedication and we reiterate our full support for her mandate.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280) is a dispiriting read, and we are sad to have to concur with his observation that, despite some progress, impunity for the perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence continues to be the norm in many parts of the world. Strengthening proper accountability for that crime is crucial. We reiterate our call on the Security Council to systematically and explicitly include and apply sexual violence as a designation criterion within the relevant United Nations sanctions regimes, particularly in cases

in which regimes overlap with perpetrators mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General.

Prevention, protection and prosecution should be the driving forces of all efforts. With regard to prevention, we reiterate the importance of promoting a culture of full gender-equality and women's empowerment; supporting women's and community-based organizations; boosting women's participation in political, economic and social decision-making and peace processes; properly including men and boys and training them to become gender champions; and adopting national action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), as key measures to prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

Concerning protection, we insist on the urgency of ensuring full access to comprehensive, coordinated and quality services, including sexual and reproductive health care, psychological support and legal counselling, as well as relief and recovery programmes for all survivors, without discrimination based on any grounds, including sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity.

With regard to prosecution, we recall the need to ensure adequate investigation and prosecution through the collection of reliable sex-disaggregated data, facilitate access to justice for survivors and ensure specific protection to and psychological support for witnesses. In that context, we emphasize the significant progress in international justice made by the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as other non-permanent international criminal tribunals and similar courts in combating conflict-related sexual violence. The ICC's jurisdiction is complementary to that of States, and the primary responsibility for bringing perpetrators to justice resides with States.

We also recognize and support the important contribution of civil society, women's organizations and women human rights defenders who challenge violent gender norms, prevent sexual and gender-based violence and provide medical and psychological services to communities. We are particularly concerned about the risks and harm faced by mothers and their children born as the result of sexual violence, and would welcome the briefers' recommendations on how to better prevent and address such situations. We also note that, according to the report of the Secretary-General, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex

individuals are sometimes specifically targeted with sexual violence in conflict, and we call on the Council to give due attention to that issue.

In the spirit of the Secretary-General's recommendations, the European Union has taken concrete actions to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence based on a holistic approach. I refer to the written version of my statement circulated in the Chamber, which details those actions, including the encouraging examples of such cooperation in the Western Balkans, the Caucasus, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, as well as the joint United Nations-EU Spotlight Initiative, which we invite all United Nations Member States to join. The United Nations can continue to rely on the full engagement and support of the European Union to achieve our shared goals and help millions of girls and women feel safe and free to realize their full potential.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Ms. Hutchinson: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to address the Security Council as the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. I would also like to thank this morning's briefers for their incredibly moving and powerful statements. I especially thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and her team for all the work that they do.

This year NATO is celebrating its seventieth anniversary, which provides an opportunity not only to reflect on its achievements, but also to look to the future. NATO's core mission over the past 70 years has been to closely safeguard the fundamental rights of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law — themes that resonate so clearly with the women and peace and security agenda and underscore our work on the protection of civilians. The adoption of the women and peace and security resolutions and the work of the Council have established a new course in understanding and responding to the grievous, systematic sexual abuse of women and girls in and around conflict. Awareness that conflict-related sexual violence affects not only women and girls, but entire communities, is now entrenched in our collective thinking.

Last year, NATO Heads of State and Governments endorsed a new policy and action plan on women, peace and security, introducing our guiding principles of

integration, inclusiveness and integrity. Those collective principles provide a connective tissue linking security, stability and protective environments, and frame our approach to protection through the kaleidoscope of women and peace and security. For NATO, that means that there can be no protection without participation because, at its root, sexual violence is a gendered issue.

Sexual violence arises from fundamental gender inequalities. Therefore, focusing on solely protective and preventative solutions is limited and insufficient. In order to effectively combat sexual violence, we must address and dismantle all obstacles that impede women's full participation in peace and security, including in peace processes. Eradicating sexual violence in conflict and focusing on operationally effective responses to that appalling abuse of women and girls is critical, but it should not take place at the expense of the empowerment of women.

The long-term destructive nature of conflict-related sexual violence, as well as its effect on entire communities, continues to pose significant threats to global peace and security. For NATO, that has become central to its efforts to protect civilians in its missions and operations.

In Afghanistan, we are working closely with the Ministries of the Interior and Defence to improve their efforts to tackle sexual violence. Our work is helping to increase the awareness of the Afghan authorities and bolster their efforts to identify and investigate acts of sexual violence.

In Kosovo, we are focusing on community outreach and ensuring that the Kosovar population understands NATO's role in combating conflict-related sexual violence.

In Iraq, we are working with the military medical school to increase awareness of conflict-related sexual violence, with a particular focus on providing advice to medical personnel on how to work with victims and survivors and how to put effective prevention strategies into action.

Finally, at NATO headquarters, we are developing a new handbook for commanders and operational planners as a reference tool for critical thinking and decision-making in military crisis situations and to guide them as they put in place the actions required to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

But there is so much more we can do, because, despite our best efforts, the efforts of the international community, the plethora of attention and the resolutions, commitments, endorsements and financing, women constantly remain at risk and subject to heinous brutality around the world.

While the Alliance has long held the women and peace and security principles as an innate element of our core tasks, on this seventieth anniversary year we pledge to do even more to address conflict-related sexual violence within our operational mandates and we will continue, wherever we are deployed, to create the conditions for security that will allow women and girls to live free from abuse and violence. Only in that way will we fulfil our international obligations to prevent the threat of violence and protect those most in need. Ultimately, in tackling sexual violence against women and girls, we do more than help individual victims; we set a tone for respecting fundamental dignities and human rights, and by doing that we can lay a foundation for lasting stability.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan thanks the German presidency for highlighting our attention on preventing conflict-related sexual violence. We commend Secretary-General Guterres for the insights drawn from his annual report (S/2019/280) and Special Representative Patten for the overview of her mandate and work. We also thank the Nobel Peace Prize laureates and other briefers for their passionate plea to us, as well as their horrifying analyses of that scourge in different parts of the world.

Kazakhstan endorses the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's annual report. Despite the robust normative framework and the progress achieved, we need to collectively reflect on how to prevent conflict-related sexual violence from increasing at the alarmingly high levels as it presently does. At the same time, we have to take measures to ensure that sexual violence is not used as a tactic of war or aggravated by human trafficking, which can become a source of income for armed groups, terrorist organizations and transnational organized crime networks.

That scourge requires concerted and well-coordinated cross-national interventions with a One United Nations approach. All efforts of the United

Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict require improved coordination with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL and regional and subregional organizations. We also need initiatives and cooperation for prevention, information-sharing and documentation, assistance for victims, legal support, the training of security forces, new orientations for the legal, judiciary and criminal justice systems and exchanges of best practices in combating sexual violence.

Our deliberations today make it clear that the international community should ensure accountability for sexual violence in conflict and bring a resolute end to impunity. The Security Council sanctions committees should therefore include, where appropriate, sexual violence as a designated criterion for sanctions against individuals and organized networks, including non-State parties to conflicts. Regional organizations and Member States, which have the primary responsibility for responding to sexual violence and strengthening the law enforcement system, should harmonize their national legislations with United Nations standards.

Conflict-related sexual violence affects every aspect of a survivor's life and leads to the stigmatization of victims and the devastation of physical and economic security, especially of displaced and rural women. We therefore need a survivor-centred approach, which should include full, competent and speedy psychological support, health care, legal assistance and socioeconomic reintegration. Cooperation with religious leaders, civil society and local communities is most important if we want to change extremist narratives, shift the stigma of sexual violence to the perpetrators, promote education and create awareness around the empowerment of women.

Kazakhstan strongly believes that preventing sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers should be an absolute priority, along with the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on such offences. All troops and police contingents should have full training prior to and during deployment. We support the greater recruitment of well-qualified women military and police officers and the deployment of women protection advisers to peacekeeping missions.

Our country integrates all elements of the women and peace and security agenda, including on conflict-related sexual violence, in our national legislation, with

new strong pro-women policies. Training on gender equality for the armed and security forces and women's deployment in United Nations peacekeeping operations are priorities for Kazakhstan's national peacekeeping training centre.

At the regional level, we are supporting Afghanistan with a multidimensional approach of conflict prevention, accompanied by humanitarian and development assistance, by strengthening the security and development nexus. At the international level, we are contributing to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which funds projects in post-conflict settings.

To conclude, we welcome today's adoption of the milestone resolution 2467 (2019) and are pleased to inform the Council that Kazakhstan will today present our concrete pledges to accelerate our implementation of the women and peace and security agenda by the anniversary in 2020 at the high-level companion event, hosted by Germany and the United Kingdom. We will be fully engaged, together with the international community, in promoting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the new agenda for peace to protect women's dignity and gender empowerment.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Ms. Chidiac (Lebanon) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate of the Security Council on a theme that deeply affects all of humankind, our collective conscience and human values.

We also thank all the briefers for their remarks and their commitment.

On this occasion, we welcome the presence among us of the man who repairs women, Dr. Mukwege, and the women who speak on behalf of all of us, Ms. Nadia Murad and Ms. Inas Miloud.

Often, war is not simply a sordid machine gun, a crude grenade or a criminal tank. Terrorism cannot be reduced to a deceitful and deadly ideology. Conflicts, wars and terrorism are also synonymous with women who suffer unthinkable violence and indelible trauma to their flesh and bodies. When their own bodies are turned into assault weapons against themselves, we all face the moral and ethical imperative to act.

We must act as a moral obligation and collective responsibility. We must act to defend and protect, prevent and deter, investigate and hold accountable, denounce and judge and never again allow State and non-State actors alike to brandish women's bodies as weapons against themselves or use rape as a weapon of terrorism and sexual violence of any kind as a tactic of war. But we must also act to guarantee the rights of all survivors of sexual violence, including their sexual and reproductive health rights.

To that end, we call for full respect for the norms of international law and international humanitarian law in times of war and the implementation of all the Security Council's resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda, the cornerstone of which is resolution 1325 (2000). In that context, it should be recalled that this resolution and all those that have followed highlight the evidence that women are a vital partner for peace and security in the world and that their involvement in negotiations and peace efforts would pave a clear path towards lasting peace.

In the national context, we emphasize the importance of establishing inclusive and gender-sensitive inquiry and communication mechanisms and the introduction of relevant legislation that seeks to bring to trial the forces behind and any individual responsible for acts of sexual violence not only against women, but also against men and children. To that end, specialized funds should be mobilized to promote and strengthen the institutions responsible for monitoring, investigating and prosecuting these wrongdoings. In addition, improved conditions of access to justice remain a basic component of the process.

Lastly, let us not forget the need to ensure the participation of civil society and of male and female human rights defenders in the women and peace and security agenda and to recognize the fundamental role they play, often at the risk of their lives.

In brief, what we will now have to consider is how to move from denial to confession; from bullying and stigma to empowerment; from the silence of humiliation to the courage of the truth; from indifference to compassion; from impunity to justice; from injustice to atonement; and from words to actions, because this world is not for those men who wage war but for all of the women who want peace!

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Edrees (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to join others in expressing my sincere appreciation to the German presidency of the Security Council for April and to thank it for attaching such importance to the women and peace and security agenda, especially the issue of sexual violence in conflict that we are discussing today.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their efforts. I also thank all of today's women briefers, who shared their valuable ideas and experiences during this important debate.

Sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations is a phenomenon that exposes a number of imbalances that need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner. The nexus between this phenomenon and the general status of women and girls, as well as certain negative social behavioural patterns, is indeed a basic one. The issue is also mainly connected to accountability and fighting impunity, as indicated in the concept note (see S/2019/313, annex).

Over the past 11 years, the Security Council has adopted five very important resolutions addressing several aspects of sexual violence in conflict situations, including the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, the link between organized crime and terrorism, trafficking in persons, reporting and monitoring mechanisms, as well as the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Despite all that, the phenomenon of sexual violence against women and girls persists. Those violations are primarily perpetrated by non-State entities and terrorist groups. This proves that we still have a long way to go.

The holistic approach to dealing with sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations starts before the occurrence of sexual violence. It includes raising awareness of the rights of women and girls, changing certain negative social behavioural patterns and, of course, preventing conflicts in the first place. In conflict situations, we must provide the necessary protection for women and girls specifically and make sure that they are not subjected to sexual violence by the warring parties. This approach extends to post-conflict situations, and in that regard Egypt supports the survivor-centred approach to providing the necessary care and protection to survivors in a comprehensive manner.

Egypt believes that women play a vital role in society. Women are not merely victims; they perform an essential role in fighting sexual exploitation and abuse as part of their general role in the women and peace and security agenda. We must enhance that important role. Experience has shown that women are capable of overcoming a number of obstacles in dealing with the victims of sexual violence, exposing perpetrators, fighting impunity and providing the necessary help to the victims. In that context, we recall the open debate held in the Security Council on 11 April on women in peacekeeping (see S/PV.8508).

The Egyptian presidency of the African Union for 2019 focuses mainly on reconstruction and development in post-conflict situations, based on a comprehensive approach that includes building the capacities of national armies and law-enforcement authorities to combat terrorism and crime and providing the necessary care for communities in post-conflict situations, including children, women and girl victims of those conflicts.

Egypt has already developed a number of programmes and mechanisms specifically for the Sahel region of Africa, which has been suffering under the yoke of armed conflicts, the activities of terrorist groups and organized crime. We are fully prepared to cooperate with all partners in developing and implementing projects and specialized programmes that provide the necessary care and protection to women and girl survivors of sexual violence, in cooperation with the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development.

Egypt strongly supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. In that context, the Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding is holding training courses for Egyptian, Arab and African military and police personnel, in cooperation with United Nations specialized agencies. The aim is to train these personnel before deployment in how to deal with situations of sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict areas.

In conclusion, I reiterate that Egypt fully supports the Council's efforts to promote fighting sexual violence in conflict areas and is fully prepared to cooperate with all relevant parties in that regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mrs. Blokar Drobič (Slovenia): I thank German presidency for organizing this debate and the invited speakers for their briefings and testimonies.

Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union and would like to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

We once again welcome the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2019/280). We are outraged by the persistent and widespread occurrence of sexual violence in armed conflict and join others in condemning these violations.

Regarding resolution 2467 (2019), adopted this morning, we regret the fact that agreement could not be reached on issues of crucial importance, including providing sexual and reproductive health services to all survivors of sexual violence in conflict. Ensuring comprehensive assistance to all survivors of these heinous crimes is at the heart of a survivor-centred approach.

We must seriously increase our efforts to do three important things: prevent such heinous crimes from ever happening again, bring those responsible to justice and provide victims with all the assistance and help they need and deserve. We must do all of that regardless of whether a situation is on the agenda of the Security Council.

In the past decade, an important paradigm shift has been made: conflict-related sexual violence is itself understood as a threat to international peace and security. It especially impedes women's participation in peace and political processes, including post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. In most cases, sexual violence in conflict occurs where there is systemic discrimination against women and girls. We must therefore promote efforts to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in law and practice.

Again, sexual violence in contemporary conflicts is not a side effect. Rather, it is a front-line consideration, a horrifying tactic of war, a means of repression, terror and control used to humiliate and injure victims, their families and their entire communities. All survivors, regardless of their gender or age, are traumatized and stigmatized for life. Entire generations and communities are affected for decades to come.

Ensuring accountability and ending impunity is of paramount importance. The primary responsibility to protect civilians and bring perpetrators to justice

always resides with States. Ensuring accountability remains a major challenge. In this regard, the role of international criminal justice has been recognized, in particular the International Criminal Court. Slovenia supports the different international mechanisms for investigation and prosecution of such crimes.

We also express our support for the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report (S/2019/280) to fully integrate the issue of conflict-related sexual violence into the work of its sanctions committees and include sexual violence as an explicit designation criterion for sanctions as well as to include measures to prevent conflict-related sexual violence in security-sector- and justice-reform initiatives.

The approach to sexual and gender-based violence must be survivor-centred, and awareness-raising activities must be added in parallel to victim assistance so as to fight stigmatization of the survivors and children born as a result of sexual violence and to challenge negative perceptions and misunderstandings that prevent survivors from rebuilding their lives.

Slovenia is addressing the correlation of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in its second national action plan on women, peace and security for the period 2018-2020, adopted in November 2018. The plan contains, inter alia, several activities relating to prevention and accountability. In June 2018, Slovenia also joined the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies and committed to stepping up its engagement in prevention and response to gender-based violence. Last year, we allocated an additional financial contribution for prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The education and training on women, peace and security, which were systematically introduced throughout the Slovenian Armed Forces, are also an important domestic achievement.

Let me conclude by once again confirming our strong support for United Nations action against conflict-related sexual violence. We call on all parts of the United Nations to continue prioritizing this important issue and further call on the Security Council to strongly, systematically, consistently and promptly respond to all violations in situations of armed conflict. Neither silence nor tolerance nor impunity is an option. This is a message that should clearly emanate from the Security Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramirez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the German presidency for convening this debate and extend my gratitude to those who have enriched the discussion today.

Sexual violence is always an aberrant crime and a flagrant and unacceptable violation of human rights. When it occurs in the context of a conflict situation, it becomes a war crime as well, one that contravenes international humanitarian law and, as a result, sanctioning it and providing redress become a matter of interest to the international community.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict. Since then, remarkable progress has been made, particularly with regard to the international community's recognition that sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict constitute a threat to international peace and security. However, important challenges remain, not only in terms of accountability and the fight against impunity, but also in terms of the definition of the phenomenon itself.

Member States must strengthen their national capacities in order to have the legal and institutional frameworks in place to ensure the investigation and prosecution of those who are guilty of these crimes. To that end, our national laws must be based on the application of fundamental principles, such as equality before the law, respect for human rights, and fair, effective and non-discriminatory access to justice systems that incorporate gender and intercultural perspectives in a cross-cutting manner.

For the timely prevention and effective combat of conflict-related sexual violence, it is necessary to recognize and address at least three inescapable factors: first, structural gender inequalities; secondly, historical discrimination against women and girls; and, thirdly, marginalization, especially of vulnerable groups. All these factors are a fundamental part of the origin of these crimes. If we also add to all of the foregoing weak institutions of justice, fear of denunciation, fear of reprisals, the rejection of families and the prejudices of the communities themselves, we can surely better understand what are some of the main obstacles that victims face in accessing justice.

That is why it is urgent to change the social norms that continue to perpetuate as equal the impunity of the aggressors, on the one hand, and the suffering of the victims, on the other. It must also be recognized, however regrettable it may be, that victims often do not find satisfactory answers to their most pressing needs, hence the importance of redoubling efforts. Achieving effective gender equality is unavoidable if the goal is the sustainable development of our societies. Women must participate fully and effectively in political, economic and social life. That is the only way to build just, inclusive and peaceful societies that lead justly to sustainable peace.

There is concern that the term "sexual violence" may not be properly codified in international law. It should be recalled that this term was not explicitly included in the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, adopted in 1974 by the General Assembly in resolution 3318 (XXIX). It is worth asking whether the definition agreed upon so far is really sufficient for the required approach to all manifestations or acts of violence of a sexual nature perpetrated, especially against women and children, in the context of armed conflicts. We therefore take this opportunity to endorse the relevance of the Geneva Conventions, in particular common article 3 and article 27 of the Fourth Convention, which incorporate an express reference to the protection of women against rape, forced prostitution or any form of indecent assault.

We very much appreciate that the Secretary-General places the rights of victims and survivors at the centre of his strategy as a response to this serious problem. We hope that all necessary measures will be implemented in order to prevent survivors from facing situations of revictimization and to provide them with the necessary comprehensive support to ensure their rehabilitation and strengthen their resilience. We therefore call on the Council to support the recommendations put forth by the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2019/280), in particular the following recommendations.

First, it must include in a timely manner sexual violence as a specific criterion for imposing sanctions. Secondly, it should systematically include the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and include early warning indicators on sexual violence as part of their civilian protection structures. Thirdly, it should promote the participation of victims and civil society, in particular

women's organizations, in all activities to prevent and counter that scourge. Fourthly, it should promote greater participation by women in peace and ceasefire negotiations and ensure the inclusion of provisions on sexual violence in such agreements. Fifthly, it should further strengthen prevention by supporting efforts to ensure that perpetrators included in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General are held accountable for their crimes. On that last point, we must underscore the fundamental role that the International Criminal Court can play in combating impunity for such atrocity crimes when they constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The protection of and respect for the human rights of women and their participation in the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts are crucial to ensuring more peaceful and secure societies. Communities cannot be healthy, fair or inclusive when the needs of large sectors of their populations are ignored. The issue that we are dealing with today must therefore remain a priority on national agendas and, of course, on that of the Security Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this high-level open debate on sexual violence in conflict. I appreciate your efforts as President of the Security Council for this month and wish you every success. I also want to thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the briefers for their statements.

I congratulate the Security Council on its adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), on sexual violence in conflict.

Our world is experiencing an unprecedented wave of violence and conflict, which various extremist groups, such as Da'esh, Boko Haram and others, have used as a tool to sow terrorism and terrorize societies, in particular the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially women and girls. We have seen in Iraq, Syria, Myanmar and other countries serious violations and heinous sexual violence being committed, which have led to social and psychological trauma that threatens the fabric of our societies and international peace and security.

The coordinated and prompt response of the international community and the United Nations

system is very essential to address the needs of women survivors of violence and to rehabilitate them in their societies and in areas of conflict. The role of civil society organizations and local communities to that end is also pivotal, without forgetting the importance of collective international efforts in strengthening accountability and laying the groundwork for justice. Those are all extremely important factors in combatting sexual violence in areas of conflict.

Jordan has always sought to be a major driving force for peace and security. In spite of the challenges, the lack of resources, the flow of refugees and our geographical position in an area that has suffered from conflicts, we have managed to transform many of those challenges into opportunities to offer health care, education and jobs, as well as to involve our men and women in building, development and relief efforts.

The Syrian refugee crisis, as a result of which we have hosted 1.3 million refugees, the majority of whom are women and girls, demands joint efforts with security and humanitarian organizations at all levels in order to provide the refugees with services. This flow of refugees has put various pressures on the host communities and led to changes in attitude and social behaviour that threaten peace and security in the host communities and the refugee camps. Those changes have had an impact on the situation of women and girls, such as early and forced marriages, sexual and physical violence and a loss of civil and legal rights.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has tackled those challenges, in coordination with its various institutions, in line with its national assistance plan for the Syrian refugee crisis. To that end, we have established and implemented mechanisms and measures such as awareness-raising campaigns in local host communities and refugee communities. Furthermore, we have provided a wide range of education, health care and legal services for the protection and empowerment of women and girls, as well as to strengthen their resilience and their ability to adapt. In addition, we have launched job and rehabilitation programmes to allow male and female refugees to earn a livelihood, be rehabilitated and work so that they will be able to return voluntarily and safely to their country and communities.

Based on my country's conviction that women play an important role in establishing and building national, regional and international peace and security in line with resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace

and security, the Jordanian National Commission for Women, with the broad participation of civil society actors, launched a 2018-2021 national plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000). The plan is based on four main pillars: participation, protection, assistance and recovery. The plan also meets the strategic goals for armed conflict set out in the 1995 Beijing Declaration, including strengthening the participation of women in operations to prevent conflicts, building and enhancing peace, security and stability, resolving conflicts, decision-making and participating in peacekeeping operations. The national plan also takes into account our Kingdom's commitment to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and focuses on the role of youth and men as partners in supporting women's participation and strengthening efforts to prevent and resolve armed conflicts. The plan also reflects Jordan's commitment to respecting human rights and promoting the principles of justice, equality and participation.

As a pioneer among countries that combat terrorism and violent extremism, Jordan seeks to address terrorism and fight violent extremism. It is also keen to protect women and girls from the danger of violent extremism. We stress the key and pivotal role of women in guarding societies against extremism and promoting a culture of peace. We underscore our collective responsibility to establish peace as a priority and to combat all attempts to sow sedition, hatred and sexual violence. In that regard, we underline the importance of ensuring the necessary funding for the implementation of our national, regional and international plans.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Djibouti.

Mr. Doualeh (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Djibouti, vehemently condemns the coordinated terrorist attacks that targeted places of worship and hotels in Sri Lanka, leading the bloody massacre of countless innocent victims. We reiterate our solidarity with the people and Government of Sri Lanka.

(*spoke in English*)

Djibouti expresses its appreciation to the delegation of Germany for convening this important discussion on the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence, its impact on international peace and security, and ways to strengthen accountability. We are grateful for the continued efforts and commitment of the Secretary-General, as reflected in his annual report (S/2019/280) on the implementation of resolutions 1820 (2008),

1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010). We value the work undertaken by the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict and the team of experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence/women protection advisers in their efforts to prevent and address all forms of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

A few days ago, we commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide with our brothers and sisters in Rwanda. The prohibition of rape is one of the oldest rules of war, having been prohibited in the first modern code of war, the Lieber Code of 1863 and the 1949 Geneva Conventions. It was only in September 1998, in the case of Jean-Paul Akayesu before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, that a tribunal handed down a conviction for rape as a crime against humanity. The Tribunal stated unequivocally that rape and sexual violence constituted one of the worst ways of harming the victim as he or she suffered both bodily and mental harm.

Building on that jurisprudence, the development of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was seen by many as a significant milestone in the prosecution of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. Article 8 of the Rome Statute includes rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization or any other form of sexual violence as war crimes in cases of both international and non-international armed conflict.

Many other speakers, including the remarkably brave 2018 Nobel Peace Prize laureates Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege Mukengere, continue to bring conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence to the world's attention. Djibouti thanks them for their presence here with us today and for their contributions.

Despite the progress made, sexual and gender-based violence continue in conflicts today. It remains uniquely concealed and distinctively difficult to prosecute. I would like to focus on the importance of addressing the silence around such crimes. As Dr. Mukwege has explained, staying silent about sexual violence has granted impunity to the perpetrators and increased its proliferation. "What is keeping rape in our society is silence. The silence is really a strong tool of rapists, so they can go on destroying girls and women," he said. "If she stays in silence, she can be raped again and again and she cannot protect others."

The United Nations and its Members must endeavour to help survivors report their experiences concerning their conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and thereby increase accountability. We should all seek to reduce the stigma around sexual and gender-based violence. We should find creative ways to raise awareness, including through the use of community radio, theatre and community and religious leaders. We need long-term communal strategies to change underlying behavioural norms that somehow do not condemn sexual and gender-based violence as the atrocious crimes they are.

The United Nations should help community-based first responders to better document sexual and gender-based violence. Health-care providers play a critical role in providing urgent care and immediate clinical care to survivors. In addition to that moral imperative, they could help hold perpetrators accountable. It has been convincingly demonstrated that victims who report rape and the medical providers who document their accounts support the justice process through forensic medical examinations and by recording findings in any final medical report, collecting evidence from a survivor's body and testifying in court. Providing adequate training in those areas is therefore critical.

In conclusion, Djibouti supports the establishment of commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions to address rape and other sexual crimes in their investigations of human rights violations in war zones.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Bird (Australia): let me begin by joining others in expressing Australia's deep shock and sadness at the horrific terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka. we extend our deepest condolences and stand with Sri Lanka as it continues to come to terms with that senseless and barbaric attack.

Turning to today's agenda, in order to eradicate sexual violence in conflict, we need to address all four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda, not just protection. It is not simply an issue of protection but of prevention and accountability.

Protection starts with prevention. Sexual violence in conflict is part of a continuum of violence, primarily against women and girls, which is rooted in gender inequality. Research clearly shows that gender inequality, including violence against women

in peacetime, is a direct cause of sexual violence in conflict. Indeed, gender inequality is the strongest indicator of a country's risk of conflict.

While this debate naturally focuses on violence during conflict, we must not forget that the fundamental route to prevention relies in addressing the fundamental cause: gender inequality in all its forms. Sexual violence is not an inevitable occurrence in the ordinary course of conflict. It is not something we should ever accept. Australia is outraged by the persistent and widespread occurrence of sexual violence in armed conflict. A climate of impunity discourages reporting, undermines assistance and abets further violations.

We acknowledge the central importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all people in conflict situations, but particularly survivors of rape and sexual violence. Access to the full range of quality reproductive and sexual health care, services and information is critical to the recovery of survivors and the restoration of their dignity and bodily autonomy. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are vital human rights. Respecting and upholding those rights, particularly the right to services and information, can be the difference between life and death.

In addressing sexual violence in conflict, we need to identify solutions and approaches that are context-specific, inclusive and informed by experience, especially that of survivors. Our actions must be survivor-centred and recognize diversity of experience and need. For example, children born of rape and their mothers have particular needs and we must not forget that male survivors, including boys, have their own barriers to accessing services.

We emphasize the importance of ensuring that our military, police and service providers develop positive internal cultures that are gender-sensitive and do not tolerate violence. Further, we encourage the use of gender advisers in peacekeeping, the military and the police and note that the representation of women is not the same as gender expertise.

Finally, diverse women must be involved in all aspects of our efforts to end sexual violence and in the design and implementation of services to survivors of sexual violence in conflict. Australia commends the extraordinary work of survivor-advocates, civil society organizations and human rights defenders. We call on Member States to listen to their voices and to support their work.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mrs. Raz (Afghanistan): I would like to thank the German presidency for holding today's meeting on conflict-related sexual violence. It reflects the Council's focus, and we hope that today's discussions will reinforce the efforts of all States to enhance progress on the protection of women.

The Government of Afghanistan is strongly committed to protecting women's rights and to preventing violence against women in armed conflict. We call on all parties in conflict in Afghanistan to prevent violence against women. That commitment is a reflection of our international and national responsibilities, which are enshrined in our Constitution and national laws and are implemented through the policies and programmes adopted by the Government.

Our national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is a strong example of the Government's commitment, through which we are combating conflict-related sexual violence and working to protect and empower women in all aspects. As part of the protection pillar of our plan, we have improved our legal structure through the enforcement and amendment of legislation to safeguard women from all types of violence and discrimination. Our revised penal code, which entered into force in February 2018, has been expanded by criminalizing all forms of conflict-related sexual violence as a war crime, a crime against humanity and an act of genocide.

Under our law on the elimination of violence against women, various awareness-raising activities are being carried out at all levels nationwide, including in provincial communities and committees.

More broadly, our protection measures are based on a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of violence against women and children. All cases of crimes against women are investigated and referred to judicial institutions, based on various national laws and the law on the elimination of violence against women. Our security and judicial institutions have taken new measures to ensure accountability for crimes committed against women, including sexual violence, which have had a notable impact on deterrence and have led to a drop in crimes committed against women. We have also established a mechanism for registering all alleged and reported crimes nationwide to ensure that all cases are identified and fully addressed.

In focusing on this type of protection we collaborate closely with various actors on the ground, including the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, local and religious figures and civil society. We have also increased our numbers of female prosecutors and judges to enable women to speak openly about any alleged crime. That has been an effective reform in the judicial sector, where women are now more willing to speak up about acts of violence committed against them. Furthermore, in order to assist the survivors of gender-based violence, we are making sure that family guidance centres are providing legal advice and health and psychosocial services in all parts of the country.

All those measures demonstrate a comprehensive approach to ensuring women's protection using various means, both within and outside the framework of Government. We are pleased to report that public-awareness initiatives have been making increasing progress, broadening wide networks of actors and advocates. In that regard, public lectures, workshops and conversations on the law on the elimination of violence against women are being held in collaboration with Islamic figures, religious schools, teachers and others. Our independent administrative reform and civil service commission has developed policies to increase the ratio of women's recruitment to public institutions and their protection in the office. Beyond the civil service, active steps have also been taken in the security sector to recruit more women into the national police and military forces.

Ensuring the physical protection of women is only one aspect of our focus on upholding women's rights and empowerment. For us, protection and empowerment have a broad meaning. They also include enhancing the role of women in the civil service, the security sector, elections and the peace efforts that are under way to end the conflict. As part of the Government's commitment, we assure the Council that any potential peace agreement would in no way compromise women's rights or their proactive role in rebuilding a new Afghanistan. However, we would like to ask the Council and the participants in today's open debate to support our efforts to protect and preserve the rights of Afghan women in the gains that we have made over the past 17 years during the peace talks with the Taliban.

We welcomed the Council's adoption today of resolution 2467 (2019), and we hope and expect that it will improve the coordination of all international actors in their efforts to end sexual violence in conflict and,

more broadly, to ensure continued progress on women's safety and empowerment.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Mr. Braun (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the Secretary-General and this morning's briefers for contributing to today's open debate with their testimonies and call for action. Our thanks also go to you, Sir, and to Germany for convening this debate under your country's presidency of the Security Council.

Luxembourg associates itself with the statement delivered this morning by the observer of the European Union.

Last month, at the initiative of Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, my country hosted the international conference Stand Speak Rise Up!, which is aimed at ending sexual violence in sensitive regions. Ms. Pramila Patten, Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Nadia Murad enriched the conference with their participation just as they have contributed to today's debate. It was the first international event of its kind to focus primarily on survivors and thereby helping to humanize the subject that brings us together today.

The tenth anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict should be duly marked. Resolution 1888 (2009) established key monitoring mechanisms, including the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which carries out vital work on the ground to combat impunity and support women, men, girls and boys who have survived sexual violence. Luxembourg has supported and will continue to support the important work of Ms. Patten and her team.

How can we strengthen accountability for those who commit acts of sexual violence? We are following the efforts to find innovative solutions with interest. Technological and financial innovation can be a powerful ally of women's equality and rights on one condition, which is that we must never assume that technical solutions can solve political problems. The challenges that persist are those facing us on the ground. They are social, security-related, infrastructural and institutional in nature. Any effective solution will require the initiatives of national authorities in

cooperation with community organizations in the countries concerned. We must redouble our efforts to support them. In that regard, we believe that we must continue to consider new ways to support survivors.

The adoption of the Rome Statute marked an important step in the fight against impunity in general, but more specifically in the fight against sexual and gender-based crimes. The International Criminal Court nevertheless represents a legal channel of last resort, while the responsibility for investigating such crimes belongs first and foremost to national legal systems. With the implementation of its national action plan on women and peace and security, adopted in 2018, Luxembourg will continue to support the development of capacities to strengthen the fight against impunity. We are a long-standing partner of Justice Rapid Response and UN-Women, which work together to provide specialized expertise that can be rapidly deployed to carry out investigations and assist victims of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict situations. Male and female survivors deserve both reparations and justice, as well as the assurance that crimes will not be repeated. The responsibility to protect requires that we support them. That responsibility falls to all of us, and Luxembourg will continue to play its part in that effort.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malta.

Mr. Buttigieg (Malta): I would like to thank the German presidency for holding this annual open debate on sexual violence in conflict. I also thank the Secretary-General for his annual report (S/2019/280).

Malta fully supports the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of civil society in this area.

The annual open debate on sexual violence in conflict provides a critical opportunity for taking stock of this important aspect of the women and peace and security agenda. Although the political momentum for the fight against sexual violence has resulted in some progress, we are still a long way from eliminating that crime, partly because of the peace and security challenges that the international community continues to face, including mass migration and displacement and rising levels of violent extremism and terrorism, conflict

and the proliferation of weapons. We must redouble our efforts to sustain the momentum for change.

It is the responsibility of all States to support and assist survivors and hold perpetrators to account. It is unacceptable that perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, both from States and from non-State armed groups, should be allowed to continue to live with impunity. The fight against impunity for conflict-related sexual violence and the role of accountability as an effective prevention tool are crucial to the women and peace and security agenda. When sexual violence is not addressed, reconciliation efforts and transitions to more stable, secure and peaceful societies are undermined, often resulting in long-lasting effects on survivors and their families and communities. In that regard, the importance of the role of civil society, including women's rights groups, in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconciliation efforts at the grass-roots level cannot be stressed enough. We must continue to support them.

The continued effective collaboration and coordination between all Security Council instruments for women and peace and security and conflict-related sexual violence is very much welcome. Malta fully supports the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

We agree that a holistic, survivor-centred approach is needed when dealing with the fight against sexual violence in conflict — one that is based on gender equality, inclusive of all stakeholders, and can be integrated in United Nations programmes and actions across the board. By pursuing such an approach, which is essential for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, and by continuing our work on gender equality and ensuring the full and effective participation of women and girls in all spheres, we will be able to make a real difference.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of 51 members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, co-chaired this year by Denmark and the State of Qatar.

The Group would like to thank Germany for organizing today's important open debate. I would also like to extend our gratitude to Nobel Peace Prize laureates Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Nadia Murad

for their informative briefings and persistent efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and armed conflict.

As the Secretary-General noted, sexual violence in conflict is a historically hidden crime that requires early warning and swift responses. Sexual violence, including rape, is not just a by-product of war but is increasingly employed as a deliberate strategy by State and non-State actors to retaliate against, terrorize, intimidate, control and displace civilians. Such acts may amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes or genocide. Further, sexual violence in conflict significantly exacerbates and prolongs situations of armed conflict, destroys the social fabric of communities and impedes peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

Sexual violence is a pervasive facet of many conflicts today that claims thousands of victims every year. In South Sudan, sexual violence in conflict remains rampant and is often used as a form of collective retribution against ethnic rivals. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan reported 1,157 cases of sexual violence during 2018 — and those are only the reported cases in a context of notoriously underreported incidents.

Similarly, as Ms. Murad has attested, the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has systematically committed rape and sexual violence against Yazidi women and girls, practices which the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic has characterized as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

As it is the primary responsibility of Member States to protect their populations against genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing, including those involving rape and sexual violence, the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect would like to stress the following points.

First, strengthening the capacity of national institutions is critical to ensure accountability for such crimes perpetrated in the past and to prevent and deter the perpetration of such crimes in the future. It is of utmost importance that States put in place and enforce legislative and institutional procedures to comprehensively address sexual violence in conflict and prevent its occurrence.

Despite the increased awareness of the issue, most incidents of mass rape continue to be met with impunity.

States have the primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting crimes committed within their jurisdiction and national accountability efforts should be encouraged and supported, including through the strengthening of judicial cooperation between States. Fact-finding missions, investigative mechanisms, commissions of inquiry and hybrid and international courts and tribunals provide complementary avenues for accountability when and where options under domestic law prove insufficient.

Secondly, there is an urgent need for a survivor-centred approach to support the needs of victims of sexual and gender-based violence before, during and after situations of conflict. The international community should support the provision of appropriate medical, psychosocial and socioeconomic reintegration assistance and services to survivors in order to prevent their revictimization and restore the social fabric of societies after conflict.

Thirdly, at the heart of sexual violence lies a disregard for human rights, as well as the perpetuation of gender inequality and systematic discrimination. Sexual violence in conflict must be addressed with the active and equal participation of women in identifying prevention mechanisms and holistic, rights-based solutions that address their needs. It is equally important to continue to engage men and community leaders to play a positive role in addressing gender stereotypes and societal exclusion mechanisms.

Fourthly, the Security Council could and should make better use of targeted sanctions to prevent and halt sexual violence, including through basing listing criteria on the involvement in the perpetration of sexual violence. In that context, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Panels of Experts should consistently brief and give information on individuals or entities responsible for perpetrating sexual violence to sanctions committees, encourage Member States to list them and recommend targeted sanctions.

Lastly, training on gender issues, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and addressing sexual violence in conflict should be a mandatory component of national military and police training, as well as predeployment and in-mission training of all United Nations peacekeeping and civilian personnel. In that regard, we support the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and welcome

the Secretary-General's initiative on the voluntary compact between the United Nations and Member States to prevent and eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse.

Sexual violence in conflict need not be an inevitable side effect of armed conflict — it can be prevented and stopped. While significant normative progress has been achieved in recent years, it is also clear that words on paper are not yet matched by facts on the ground. In that regard, it is imperative that the members of the Security Council take timely and decisive action to end and prevent sexual violence in conflict, if and when they may amount to atrocity crimes.

In closing, the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect would like to recognize and pay tribute again to the important work accomplished by Dr. Mukwege and Ms. Murad, including providing critical medical, psychosocial and socioeconomic reintegration support to the survivors of sexual violence in conflict and addressing impunity for those heinous crimes. We would like to ask — how can we, as members of the responsibility to protect community, more efficiently integrate gender considerations and the prevention of sexual violence into our work?

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the African Union.

Ms. Mohammed: I wish to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening today's important debate on the theme "Women and peace and security: sexual violence in conflict". I would also like to thank Special Representative Pramila Patten, Dr. Denis Mukwege, Ms. Nadia Murad, Ms. Amal Clooney and Ms. Inas Miloud for their insightful and passionate albeit troubling briefings. I also commend the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/280), which strongly underlines sexual violence as a tactic of war — one that must be addressed through a stronger survivor-centred approach.

The year 2019 is an important year for the women and peace and security agenda. Ten years ago, the Security Council adopted the landmark resolution 1888 (2009), which established the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, of which I wish to acknowledge and commend the tireless work and impact it is making on thousands of lives. We are also stepping up our efforts for the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), both at the policy

level and on the ground, to ensure that women are core partners in the maintenance of international peace and security, through participation in prevention, mediation and post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction.

The African Union reiterates its profound conviction that the women and peace and security framework, based on Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1888 (2009) and subsequent Council resolutions, remains a strong framework that guides our global efforts to build more peaceful and sustainable societies. In view of that, permit me to focus my statement on three main points.

First, the AU recognizes that structural gender inequalities and discrimination against women, girls and vulnerable communities represent some of the most profound root causes of conflict-related sexual violence. The disturbing reality is that sexual violence continues to be a major tactic in the broader strategy of parties to war and conflict. In that vein, we welcome the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), despite its weaknesses, and we hope that it will send a strong signal to perpetrators as we continue to defend the victims of such heinous crimes.

The African Union, through and the Peace and Security Department and the Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, have worked very closely with the United Nations, through the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and UN-Women, to address that scourge. Together we have led fact-finding solidarity missions to operationalize the women and peace and security agenda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan, Chad and Niger, respectively, over the past two years.

The findings brought some of the following significant insights. Women, girls and vulnerable communities remain the primary targets of organized abductions, rape, forced marriages and sexual slavery in times of conflict. Women and girls face considerable levels of sexual exploitation in camps for internally displaced persons or during migration, including in the alarming form of sex for food. Women, girls, young men and boys are targeted as suicide bombers by extremist and terrorist groups. Finally, young men and boys also suffer from conflict-related sexual violence, notably from gang rape and forced nudity.

The African Union recognizes that those challenges are made worse by the fact that, while policies have

by and large been put in place, their implementation remains weak. It is in that perspective that the AU Peace and Security Council adopted the Continental Results Framework for Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women and Peace and Security Agenda in Africa with a view to supporting member States and other stakeholders in the acceleration of delivery on commitments.

It is regrettably accurate that women remain the principal victims of sexual and other forms of violence and discrimination in times of conflict. Nonetheless, they are also key partners as leaders at the community, national and regional levels. And indeed, in addition to the protection pillar, the AU is championing the implementation of the women, peace and security commitments, specifically the participation pillar, with particular emphasis on the role and leadership of women, peace processes and governance.

It is in that context that the AU has launched an action-oriented network of women in mediation known as FemWise-Africa, and has partnered with the United Nations under the joint framework on peace and security to enhance women's leadership in peace, security and development with the African Women Leaders Network, as recognized in resolution 2457 (2019).

Secondly, the African Union reaffirms its zero-tolerance position when it comes to the issue of sexual violence in conflict. One of the most outrageous challenges we face remains the lack of criminal accountability. Survivors have little chance of seeing their offenders face justice.

At the continental level, in its 2018 Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse for Peace Support Operations, the African Union reaffirmed its full commitment to eradicating sexual and gender-based violence in Africa. The AU has focused on operationalizing its various instruments on sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse through the work of the Office of the AU Special Envoy, the Peace and Security Department and the Women, Gender and Development Directorate.

At the level of AU member States, acts of violence against women, such as rape, domestic violence and other acts, have been criminalized in several countries. In addition to the legal and policy approach to prevention, African member States have also undertaken to build a culture of peace and non-violence. I wish to recall that African Heads of State and Government have declared

the period from 2010 to 2020 as the African Decade for Women. In that context, training centres and programmes have been developed to raise awareness of the need to combat sexual and gender-based violence, to provide the necessary knowledge and to prevent those deployed in peace-support missions from committing sexual exploitation and abuse.

Thirdly, we must adopt an approach that is survivor-centred and community-led when developing and implementing programmes and policies that address the needs of survivors. Their strength as survivors, as shared by some of the briefers today, is inspiring, and we must learn from them. The African Union offers robust support to survivors, in partnership with African civil society organizations and women-led organizations, to provide health services, physical and psychological support and legal and economic aid.

Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol guarantees the respect and promotion of women's right to health, including sexual and reproductive health. We do recognize, however, that we need to continue to enhance support for survivors, including medical and psychosocial support and support for rehabilitation.

Finally, the AU fully recognizes that gender-sensitive transitional justice should be an integral part of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction processes. Transitional justice should take into account women's and vulnerable communities' experiences of violence; fully address the role and responsibility of perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence; and address how to overcome stigmatization, while focusing on reintegration. It is our responsibility to make that happen.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): Viet Nam would like to thank the German presidency for convening this open debate. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his valuable report (S/2019/280) and to the other briefers for their in-depth remarks.

Although we have come a long way in combating sexual violence in conflict, the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism continues on a large scale. Victims suffer severe pain and social exclusion deepens their scars. Children born of wartime rape never understand why they are discriminated against even before they have come into the world. At the same

time, most perpetrators have not been held accountable for the crimes they have committed. The vicious cycle of violence, exclusion and revictimization is therefore unbreakable, undermining our peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

While conflict prevention is an ideal and long-term way to address the root causes of such suffering, immediate actions are urgently needed. In that regard, we strongly support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that all parties to conflict make commitments to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence and we welcome the progress highlighted in the report.

To develop a more holistic approach, we would like to emphasize the following points. First, there can be no place for stigmatization in any society. More awareness campaigns are needed to awaken the conscience of all members of society so that they embrace victims with the love and kindness that they desperately need. We must eradicate stigmatization in order to save the lives of thousands of survivors, open the door to the future that survivors deserve and build a bridge of connection between survivors and societies.

Secondly, life-saving services for victims, including medical care, psychological support and legal aid, should be made more available and accessible. To that end, the primary role of States should be strengthened and complemented by assistance from relevant United Nations entities, specialized agencies and peacekeeping missions. This may include technical assistance, capacity-building, sharing of expertise in law enforcement, gender-mainstreaming, women's empowerment and development.

Last but not least, the women and peace and security agenda — and the issue of sexual violence, in particular — should be looked at from both the protection and the participation angles. We fully support initiatives to further promote the participation and leadership of women in peace processes, including in peacekeeping missions. We also champion the greater participation of women in developing and advancing a culture of peace, as women are the ones who instil the values of love, harmony, compassion and resilience in societies and across generations.

In conclusion, the fight against conflict-related sexual violence is no doubt a long one but, regardless of how challenging it is, we need to sustain our momentum and devote our energies to ending this brutality. For our

part, Viet Nam reaffirms its commitment to working with the international community in this endeavour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Kelapile (Botswana): Mr. President, we congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April, and we thank you for convening today's important thematic debate. We also appreciate the briefings provided by the Secretary-General, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Nobel Peace Laureates, and the statements of the other speakers who took the floor this morning.

Botswana supports the statement delivered by the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, Ms. Fatima Mohammed, but we wish to add a few points in our national capacity.

Conflict-related sexual violence undoubtedly represents one of the most serious forms of violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Ending such violations is a moral imperative and one which we must collectively address. This is all the more crucial in conflict situations.

Our delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report contained in document S/2019/280, which offers useful analysis and recommendations for dealing with conflict-related sexual violence. The report once again highlights, *inter alia*, the fact that sexual violence is applied as a tactic of war and terror. It is observable that such methods are often used by both State and non-State actors.

As rightly noted in the Safe Schools Declaration, conflict situations do not only destroy infrastructure in educational institutions. Forced occupation of educational facilities by parties to conflict exposes children and youth to vulnerabilities stemming from sexual violence, abuse and exploitation. That is why Botswana co-sponsored the Safe Schools Declaration.

Considering the dire dimensions of the problem and its implications for international peace and security, we agree that conflict-related sexual violence can be comprehensively tackled through a multidimensional and coordinated approach to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Beyond their being subjects of violence in conflict situations, women must be enabled to play a meaningful role in conflict resolution, preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding. They must

be empowered to act as active agents of peace and transformation by creating an enabling environment where they can freely participate on an equal footing without any fear of violent acts or intimidation.

The international community has indeed come a long way in designing policies and strategies on women, peace and security. We therefore believe that, through the combination of the commitments and measures adopted globally, we are much better situated than before to achieve the purposes of resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant resolutions addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. Clearly, there is no lack of good intentions and efforts on this issue.

Urgently needed are implementation of the common tools and frameworks and better utilization of the data and information already collected on women, peace and security. These would greatly enhance evidence-based policy decisions and identification of obstacles in our way. Importantly, this year we mark two very important occasions: the lead-up to the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

At the continental level, our delegation notes that Africa, as a region that is affected by conflicts, is playing a key role in this important agenda. We are well advised that a total of some 42 instruments on this issue have been adopted by the African Union (AU) and its regional economic communities and regional mechanisms. At the national level, we also note that close to half of the member States of the AU have put in place national action plans in this area.

Our delegation welcomes these and other ongoing efforts to respond to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse. We particularly note the determination to strengthen the system-wide approach through enforcement of the existing United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as such other accompanying initiatives as the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

We also believe that enhanced coordination and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders would strengthen global efforts aimed at addressing sexual violence. In this regard, we support, *inter alia*, the work of UN-Women and the strengthened respective mandates of the Special Representative of the

Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We therefore encourage closer partnership with other relevant institutions working in this area, such as the AU's Women, Gender and Development Directorate and the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security.

The Member States have the responsibility to strengthen the capacities of their national institutions as a critical means for ensuring accountability, prevention and deterrence, including compliance with relevant obligations to prosecute all perpetrators of all forms of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse. Targeted training programmes aimed at raising awareness against gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse for personnel deployed in conflict situations should remain central to these efforts.

Equally important is provision of adequate protection for the rights and needs of victims of sexual violence in conflict environments. We believe that victims deserve platforms where they can be involved in processes of healing, rehabilitation, reconciliation and reintegration into their societies. We therefore support the continued emphasis on survivor-centred responses. In this regard, we note the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, mandated under resolution 1888 (2009), to assist Governments with criminal investigation and prosecution, protection of victims and witnesses, and reparations.

In conclusion, Botswana pledges its commitment to working with the international community on effective strategies to prevent violence against women and children in conflict situations. We remain optimistic that, with our collective will, we can bring an end to these shameful crimes against humanity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation would like to thank Mr. Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany and President of the Security Council for this month. We wish him every success in steering this constructive and important dialogue. We also thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Ms. Pramila Patten, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for their valuable briefings.

I would also like to thank the Iraqi Nadia Murad and her colleague Dr. Denis Mukwege, who were jointly awarded the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize as a result of their outstanding role in upholding the noble objectives of humankind and in defending the oppressed throughout the world. Iraq is proud of Ms. Murad, who as a young woman suffered, alongside her fellow Yazidis, terribly at the hands Da'esh. We would also like to thank Barrister Amal Clooney for the important role she has played in providing support to Yazidi women survivors.

My delegation would like to convey its sincere condolences to the people and Government of Sri Lanka and to the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks that killed many innocent victims. We categorically reject all terrorist acts that target civilians, regardless of their religious, sectarian or ethnic identity.

Iraq has turned the page on a sombre part of its history after defeating the Da'esh terrorist group, which targeted the land and people of Iraq. That group carried out the most heinous crimes, which have no precedent in human history. After the enormous sacrifices made by our people from all religious and ethnic backgrounds in order to recover their land, which was occupied by Da'esh on 10 June 2014, Iraq decided to take practical measures to return all displaced persons to their areas of origin and to provide them with redress following the suffering endured — especially by Yazidi women and girls, who are a basic component of the Iraqi society — as a result of the Da'esh terrorist group.

Allow me to explain some of the measures that my country has taken in this regard. Together with the Yazidi victims, including Nadia Murad, President Barham Salih of Iraq put forward a draft bill for Yazidi female survivors. That draft bill was submitted this month to the Iraqi Parliament, to be debated and adopted. It seeks to help Yazidi female survivors who had been kidnapped by Da'esh on 10 June 2014 and subsequently liberated. The bill aims to provide them with financial and moral compensation and to rehabilitate them in order to ensure that they have a life of dignity and to undertake all the necessary measures to reintegrate them into society and rehabilitate the infrastructure in their regions.

The bill would designate 3 August every year as a national day of awareness of the heinous crimes committed by terrorist groups, such as the torture, kidnapping, massacres and displacement of Yazidi women and girls. The law would prohibit forever

amnesty for those who are found responsible for crimes against Yazidi women. There will be no statute of limitations for those crimes. This is intended to deal, within the framework of the law, with the perpetrators of these crimes and with those who are complicit in committing them.

In the context of our work with the United Nations to prosecute the perpetrators of such crimes in the context of fighting impunity, on 25 March Iraq submitted to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict a list of persons accused of human trafficking who have been arrested by Iraqi security forces and surrendered to the Prosecutor's Office so that they can face just punishment. Iraq aims to ensure the collection of evidence for crimes perpetrated by Da'esh by working with the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, created under resolution 2379 (2017), so as to bring justice for the victims and to ensure that perpetrators are brought before Iraqi justice. Indeed, the Iraqi judicial authorities are entirely independent in their rulings and judgments according to the law. They allow for justice to be carried out for all kinds of crimes.

On 9 December 2018, Iraq launched its national strategy to combat violence against women. That is an important step to ensure the implementation of women's and girls' rights and to take measures to prevent violence against them. It was supported by the Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway and in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund, along with international civil society organizations.

In order to ensure that women's capabilities and participation can also be strengthened in the drafting of national policies and in decision-making at all levels, Iraq is working with its international partners, the United Nations and civil society organizations to draft our second national plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000). We presented our first such plan in April 2014.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil): Allow me to congratulate the German presidency on convening this meeting. I would also like to thank the briefers for their valuable insights.

Resolution 1325 (2000) was a milestone in the debate of women and peace and security. On the one hand, it aims at empowering women and amplifying their presence both in decision-making processes and in the field. On the other hand, it seeks to prevent and fight sexual violence in conflict situations. Brazil therefore commends the latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2019/280) for its sober assessment of the latest developments and measured recommendations. We reiterate our position that the use of sexual violence as an instrument of power in the context of an armed conflict is a scourge that must be completely banned.

It is imperative that the causes and effects of such violence be dealt with accordingly by the Security Council. The Security Council should do everything in its power in every particular situation it is called upon to examine. In that sense, fighting impunity is almost as important as preventing direct acts of sexual violence. Setting an example by investigating, prosecuting and eventually carrying out the appropriate sentences for those who are accused of having committed such crimes in the context of armed conflicts is a powerful deterrent in preventing another case against another victim from arising. It also helps to empower women, men, girls and boys who are affected by sexual violence in conflict to have confidence that all possible measures will be taken to repair the situation.

The establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict 10 years ago provided the Organization with an important tool kit to promote advocacy and raise public awareness of the grave question of sexual violence in conflict. Brazil commends Ambassador Pramila Patten on her efforts to keep the issue high on the international agenda and reiterates its support for the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Peacekeepers have an important role to play in the prevention of and focusing attention on situations of conflict-related sexual violence, as they are in direct contact with local populations and constitute perhaps the most visible face of the Organization. The presence of women peacekeepers on the ground, including women protection advisors, has proven to be an effective instrument to combat and prevent conflict-oriented sexual violence and to encourage survivors to report allegations of crimes committed.

In that context, the importance of increasing the presence of women in peace negotiations and on the ground becomes strikingly clear. As several studies have shown, the presence of women not only increases the likelihood of peace agreements being enforced for a longer period of time but also facilitates the treatment of issues such as conflict-related sexual violence. We therefore support initiatives that promote a greater presence of experts on conflict-related sexual violence in mediation efforts, as well as in the formulation and implementation of peacekeeping mandates.

We are proud to be able to recall an example of excellence in the field from our own armed forces. We would once again like to congratulate Brazilian Commander Marcia Andrade Braga on receiving, from the hands of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award for her work as a gender adviser in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. In the Commander's own words, the Award acknowledges how the presence of women peacekeepers in United Nations missions allows local women to discuss the issues that affect their own lives. Commander Braga's actions show us that preventing conflict-related sexual violence can benefit from simple actions such as ensuring that the voices of local women be heard.

There are many reasons to celebrate the work done over the past two decades, but we must also recognize the challenges to completely eliminate conflict-related sexual violence. In that regard, we acknowledge Germany's new resolution 2467 (2019) on sexual violence in conflict and welcome the effort to update and strengthen the international norms on this issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): I thank the leadership of Germany for convening today's debate. Let me also commend the briefers for their informative and important contributions. I would also like to take this opportunity to condemn the recent terrorist attack in Sri Lanka, in which one of our young citizens lost his precious life along with approximately 300 other people. We stand in unity with the Government and the people of Sri Lanka and express our deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives. We demand that the perpetrators of that heinous act be swiftly brought to justice.

We welcome today's adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), which we co-sponsored. Ten years ago, through resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009), respectively, the Security Council designated sexual violence in conflict as a tool of war and called on the Secretary-General to work with United Nations personnel on the ground and national Governments in strengthening the rule of law in terms of preventing sexual violence. However, the findings in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/280) that was presented today confirm the trends that sexual violence continues as a part of the broader strategy of conflict and accountability remains elusive. We found the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report quite objective and pragmatic and they clearly require the urgent attention of the Security Council.

Our role in spearheading the women and peace and security agenda and the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security underlines our commitment to create consensus across the extreme vulnerability of women during conflict and to address those vulnerabilities.

Our women experienced widespread and systematic sexual violence and abuse as a tactic of war during our war of liberation in 1971. That horrific experience has come back to haunt us with the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. The majority of the 730,000 Rohingyas who have fled atrocities in Myanmar's Rakhine state since August 2017 are women and children. Those Rohingya women and girls in the camps in Cox's Bazar were victims of horrific sexual abuse by the Myanmar forces, which is attested to by United Nations agencies and international humanitarian activists. In that connection, we deeply appreciate the good work that Special Representative Ms. Pramila Patten and her Office to bring before the world what the Rohingya women suffered before they fled and while fleeing Rakhine state.

According to Save the Children, in 2018 alone an estimated 40,000 Rohingya babies were born in the camps. Many of them are unwanted, even by their mothers, and we all can imagine why. Their recognition and compensation and ensuring a better future for them in their country of origin are issues that the international community should carefully consider.

As part of the solution to the problem of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, we should deliver on our promises and commitments. At the national level, to increase support to national

authorities, we can strengthen national laws and investigation mechanisms and provide protection to victims. In addition, we should ensure victims' rights to sexual and reproductive health care and reparations. In Bangladesh, as a top troop-contributing country, we have ensured raising awareness about sexual exploitation and abuse and predeployment training for all our peacekeepers. The Prime Minister has time and again pronounced her zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. We have also implemented the guidelines of the Supreme Court by establishing women-only committees in workplaces to hear complaints against discrimination and sexual violence against women and girls. The authorities are moving ahead with the national plan of action on women and peace and security with the help of UN-Women. Capacity-building at the local and national levels is an essential part in that regard. In that context, the signing of the framework of cooperation between the Government and the Office of the Special Representative offers a conduit for dedicated support measures.

The culture of impunity, as experienced in the case of conflict-related sexual violence, perpetuates the vicious cycle. Without bringing an end to it, justice cannot be fully achieved. In cases when the State is unwilling to ensure accountability and justice for such crimes, the international community, particularly the Security Council, cannot avoid its responsibility. The case of Rohingya women is a glaring case in point. While the whole world is asking for a resolution of the crisis through the voluntary, safe and dignified return of the Rohingyas to their place of origin, bringing the perpetrators to justice will be a critical confidence-building measure to incentivize repatriation, which we do not see happening. Can we expect the Rohingyas, particularly the women and girls who have been subject to unspeakable sexual violence, to be willing to return without any guarantee that the same fate would not befall them?

We appreciate the idea of a survivor-centred approach in dealing with victims of sexual violence. We are well aware of the difficulties that Rohingya women and children face in the camps. From our modest resource bases, we provide the Rohingya women and girls with as much specialized care as possible. We ensure the availability of sexual and reproductive health services, including obstetric, prenatal and post-natal care to the Rohingya women. We are working to identify and address policy and systemic barriers to

support services and ensure that refugee camps are safe for women and girls. We have mobilized adequate law enforcement personnel and humanitarian actors on the ground. Yet one must understand the realities of managing the largest camps in the world. The hope of return and a better future tends to become uncertain, the challenges become manifold and more complicated and desperation creeps in, particularly when the stay becomes prolonged. Certainly, the most effective way to keep all that at bay is a safe, voluntary and dignified return.

It is hypocritical to condemn the human rights violations and express horror at the new violence, while not taking strong measures to ensure the accountability of the State and individuals who are responsible for such crimes. Member States committed to conflict prevention and sustaining peace cannot turn a blind eye to State-sanctioned persecution of and discrimination against ethnic minorities or other human rights violations, including sexual violence. We also urge civil society organizations, human rights groups and other rights groups to come forward in that regard.

While we reaffirm our commitment to preventing sexual violence in conflict and in peaceful situation, we should not rest until we have done our part to ensure the punishment of those who commit and execute such heinous and inhuman acts against women and girls.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Mr. Amayo (Kenya): Kenya joins other Member States in thanking Germany for convening this important and timely debate under the women and peace and security agenda.

Indeed, 2019 is a seminal year. It leads to the twentieth anniversary of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, championed by Namibia in 2000, and marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Addressing sexual violence in conflict is a collective endeavour, not just a Government, Security Council or women's affair. Creating awareness and ownership of the objective and process must involve the whole of society in order to achieve sustainable results.

Kenya recognizes the importance of military training and accountability at all levels of engagement, including for peacekeeping missions. Rape is violence

and a basic violation of an individual human right. We have also noted that at times men and boys have been neglected as the ignored victims of sexual and gender-based violence during conflict, and in order to curb that, our interventions should be more inclusive. The mainstreaming of the role of gender advisers within peacekeeping missions is a welcome development, although more can still be done.

In 2016, Kenya inaugurated a national action plan with strategies for strengthening its judicial mechanisms and ensuring justice in a survivor-centred approach, as well as developing appropriate policy and legislation. That has ensured a conflict- and gender-sensitive approach to addressing matters pertaining to gender-based violence. The Government has gone further, partnering with civil-society organizations in order to translate the plan into various local languages as an outreach initiative. The plan's goals include, first, the active and increased participation of women at all decision-making levels in all institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict in key positions in the peace-conflict continuum, including senior posts in the military, the political arena and public service. We have also established a task force on women and peace and security within a gender-sector working group, as a platform that brings together State and non-State actors to advance our national priorities on gender in addition to integrating women and peace and security into the country's development plans. We have provided guidelines for training military and police personnel on issues of sexual and gender-based violence, with essential procedures focused on the diverse needs of survivors at the grass-roots level. Those efforts have resulted in increased dignity for survivors, more reporting of sexual and gender-based violence and a reduction in the stigma that survivors face.

My delegation recognizes and supports the African Union's zero-tolerance policy on sexual violence in times of conflict or peace through its initiatives, including the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. We strongly believe that accountability for sexual violence should be enhanced everywhere. Strengthening national criminal jurisdictions and ensuring strict compliance with the applicable standards under international humanitarian law are important. International action to end sexual violence as a tool of war should go beyond individual criminal responsibility for crimes committed for

military purposes by the rank and file and should rather focus more on assigning collective responsibility to the entire command for such crimes. As we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020, we urge Member States to continue working to create an environment that enables women and young people to actively engage in peace and security processes at all levels.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mrs. Ahmed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my country's delegation would like to express its appreciation to you, Mr. President, and your friendly country for organizing this open debate to discuss such a vital and important matter. We also thank Secretary-General António Guterres and his Special Representative, Ms. Pramila Patten. We appreciate her presence in the Chamber to listen to our statement. We are also grateful to the briefers for their valuable contributions.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier by Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

My country's delegation expresses its heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the recent horrific attacks on civilians in their country.

I am honoured to be delivering this statement before the Security Council as my country is undergoing positive historic changes. In the wake of the glorious revolution of December 2018, those developments are consolidating the rights of our people while ushering in a new era leading to a better future. I would like to focus on two core issues.

The first is the positive developments in the Sudan that are taking place as we approach the twentieth anniversary of the Security Council's adoption of the women and peace and security agenda through resolution 1325 (2000), and as we mark the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The second is the emphasis of my country's Transitional Military Council on its commitment to all regional and international treaties and agreements. The Council is also committed to cooperating with the international community to ensure the protection of human rights for all in the Sudan,

especially women's rights, and the soon-to-be-formed civilian Government will demonstrate that. We expect that the current transitional phase will enable us to make progress in the efforts to achieve peace in Darfur, and in the two regions most affected in particular, which will ultimately help us to eliminate all forms of conflict-related sexual violence.

Sudanese women have played a vital role in this great movement. The Sudanese people took to the streets to call for freedom, peace and justice, and Sudanese women participated in those protests on an equal footing while demanding their rights and anticipating a better future. There can be no question that during the upcoming period, Sudanese women will be able to actively participate in the political sphere and in leadership roles in the Sudan, thereby following in the footsteps of the great Nubian queens, or *candaces*, of the Kingdoms of Meroe and Kush.

The recent improved security situation in Darfur has had a positive impact on the status of women and girls. Major efforts have been made to achieve sustainable peace, including by establishing specialized courts, appointing public prosecutors and additional judges and setting up legal aid offices in all of Darfur's states to facilitate access to justice in cities and rural areas. That is in addition to launching weapon collection campaigns and repatriating displaced persons and ensuring their return to their villages and reintegration within their local communities. We have also provided land for refugees, ensured safe travel paths for herders and established water-distribution centres for them.

The Sudan will continue to protect and advance women by combating discrimination and gender inequality, implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, ensuring redress for victims and implementing economic-empowerment programmes for women, as well as supporting witness-protection programmes to shield the survivors of human rights violations, including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. We are also implementing training programmes for police and military personnel to improve the investigation of cases of sexual violence. Furthermore, we are working on implementing training courses for doctors and health workers to serve rape victims, and establishing psychological support centres and raising awareness about such matters. We are also working to ensure society's participation in the fight against this scourge. We hope that the international

community and our regional and international partners will support our efforts.

In conclusion, we stress that the Sudan will continue to cooperate and coordinate with the United Nations and its agencies to further the women and peace and security agenda. We reiterate that the Sudan is fully committed to a zero-tolerance policy for crimes of sexual violence and to the fight against impunity. We also underscore the importance of cooperating closely with the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in order to establish a joint cooperation framework aimed at enhancing national efforts in that regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): I would also like to join my colleagues in thanking Germany for convening today's important open debate.

We will soon be approaching the twentieth anniversary of the Council's adoption of its landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which mobilized global efforts to eliminate the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence. Since then, we have collectively made significant progress in establishing and strengthening the legal and normative framework for addressing that challenge. The international will to investigate conflict-based sexual violence is also much stronger today than ever before. Yet in many conflict situations around the world women, especially young girls, continue to bear the brunt of both physical and psychological abuse and trauma. From Myanmar to my country's region, the world continues to watch in horror as rape and sexual abuse are employed with impunity as a deliberate means to oppress entire populations and humiliate and terrorize them. As the Secretary-General noted in his recent report (S/2019/280), sexual violence continues to be employed as a broader strategy for repression, domination and subjugation to deliberately harm and scar defenceless and vulnerable communities.

Our fight against impunity for conflict-related sexual violence must continue, with a greater commitment to holding aggressors to account and never allowing political or geopolitical interests to constrain or compromise our efforts. By focusing on creating an enabling environment for the more meaningful participation of women, and by securing their seats at the table as true partners and stakeholders in all matters related to peace, mediation and reconciliation, we can

certainly give peace efforts a much better chance to succeed. I would like to make six brief, specific points.

First, while the Security Council has led the way in drawing international attention to such horrific crimes, it should also focus on addressing the root causes of conflicts, notably the protracted disputes of Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine. After all, one of the most effective ways to prevent conflict-based sexual violence is to eliminate the breeding grounds that are created by unresolved, protracted disputes. By leaving disputes unaddressed, the Council runs the risk of acting selectively and displaying a blind spot for some of the most vulnerable women who suffer disproportionately from violence perpetrated by foreign occupation.

Secondly, national Governments have a critical role to play in securing accountability for sexual violence and abuse. Only by strengthening national criminal justice systems and enacting strict victim- and witness-protection laws can impunity be effectively denied to the perpetrators of such heinous crimes.

Thirdly, real justice for the survivors of sexual abuse in conflict situations does not end with the prosecution of the perpetrators. It also requires concerted efforts to restore victims' dignity and ensure their honourable reintegration into the community by shielding them from any consequent stigma or victimization.

Fourthly, by enlisting faith leaders and respected figures from within communities, we can further promote efforts to mitigate the stigma suffered by survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

Fifthly, we also need to enlist more women in peacebuilding and mediation processes in order to take advantage of their unique skill sets. We are encouraged by the fact that women's protection advisers have been deployed in seven United Nations peacekeeping operations to convene the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence in the field. At the same time, more women should be appointed to leadership roles, particularly as special envoys and special representatives.

Finally, gender perspectives should be fully integrated into the peacebuilding paradigm, which would greatly enhance women's role in peace accords, as well as in the post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction phases. Pakistan, as one of the leading troop contributors to the United Nations, is deploying a female infantry engagement team in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo next month. We have also recently achieved the goal of deploying 15 per cent female staff officers among all those deployed in our peacekeeping missions, thereby fulfilling our responsibilities in accordance with the uniformed gender-parity strategy and Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, Pakistan has always remained a resolute supporter of global efforts to protect the vulnerable, including women and children. Our professional peacekeepers to the United Nations, including our female peacekeepers, continue to set the highest standards in fulfilling peacekeeping mandates and protecting all vulnerable sectors of the population, including women, from violence in some of the most dangerous and complex conflict situations around the world.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the important issue of the elimination of sexual violence in times of conflict. I would also like to thank the briefers in this debate for the important information they have given us.

Today's debate is highly symbolic, as it paves the way for the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and marks the tenth anniversary of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Despite the progress that has been made in this area, our debate is an ideal opportunity for the international community to renew its commitments and bring greater pressure to bear so as to not lose the ground it has gained and respond to the challenges posed by new and emerging threats, including terrorism.

I would like to express Morocco's sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Sri Lanka in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the country last Sunday.

Over the past decade, there has been a significant paradigm shift. Today sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations is considered a threat to international peace and security. At the same time, several tools have been developed to prevent and respond to such horrific crimes through the resolutions that followed resolution 1325 (2000). However, given the fact that these heinous acts persist, indignation is no longer enough. Our joint action should be further strengthened to provide real, pragmatic and sustainable

solutions for preventing and responding more effectively to acts of sexual violence and helping survivors rebuild their sense of self. I would therefore like to highlight a few points.

First, we need a more comprehensive and holistic approach that addresses the root causes of conflict and strengthens the inclusion of women in decision-making processes, promotes human and sustainable development and encourages national initiatives to end gender discrimination. Conflict prevention is a central pillar of the women and peace and security agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 5 and 16, which give priority to conflict prevention and demonstrate that women and peace and security issues and development are linked, interconnected and inseparable.

Secondly, it is important to support women's participation in debates on conflict prevention and resolution, the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Thirdly, we must combat impunity and strengthen access to justice for victims of sexual violence. A policy of zero tolerance should be embraced wherever violence occurs.

Fourthly, the stigma surrounding victims of sexual violence and children born as a result of sexual violence must be eradicated, as it constitutes a new kind of victimization. They must receive support on the medical, social and economic fronts.

Fifthly, religious leaders have an influential role to play in combating the misleading exploitation of religion as a justification for violence. They should be encouraged to speak out strongly against violence. Cooperation with local stakeholders and community leaders is also crucial, as they can identify advance signs of sexual violence, provide early-warning systems and suggest appropriate prevention strategies.

Morocco firmly condemns all forms of sexual violence, including during conflict, and considers them barbaric, brutal and inhumane methods and practices that have serious consequences for the process of establishing lasting peace and reconciliation. In our belief in the importance of the contribution of women as a key element in early-warning mechanisms, their awareness of threats to local security and their role in mediation, we are actively involved in a number

of initiatives, including the Initiative on Mediation in the Mediterranean launched by Morocco and Spain in 2012, the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, started by Spain, and the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, launched by Italy.

We recently organized an international conference in Rabat on the topic of women and peace and security that examined the role of women in mediation, conflict prevention and the issue of deradicalization. Morocco is actively involved in the training of imams, men and women preachers from several African, European and Arab countries in providing guidelines on the true peaceful principles of religion, based on tolerance and acceptance of others, and distanced from erroneous interpretations or radical orientations.

We have also been actively involved in integrating women into Morocco's contingents deployed to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Moroccan women personnel are regularly deployed in the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces contingents serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, the fifth rapid deployment battalion has a specific unit with a core female staff. Morocco has achieved the target of 15 per cent of mission experts and military observers in that category.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that Morocco, as a major contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations since the 1960s, attaches particular importance to the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse and to the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy in that regard. To that end, we associate ourselves fully with all actions in that regard, including the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and the Circle of Leadership, which His Majesty King Mohammed VI has joined at the invitation of the Secretary-General. At the national level, the Moroccan judicial system is among the strictest in this area, and many actions have been taken, including the systematic integration of national investigators into all deployed contingents — which incidentally has been recognized as an exemplary practice — the creation of a system for rotating troops every six months, and strengthened predeployment and awareness training.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): I would like to express our appreciation to the Franco-German presidencies of the Council for their leadership in advancing the issue of sexual violence in conflict. I also want to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/280), as well as this morning's briefers, who gave us moving accounts of their experiences and their perspectives on tackling impunity and increasing accountability in the area of sexual violence in conflict. We welcome the adoption today of resolution 2467 (2019) and are committed to its implementation.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. During that time we have seen groundbreaking changes in terms of understanding and addressing the root causes and the devastating impact of conflict-related sexual violence. However, sexual violence continues to be used as a strategy of warfare and a tactic of terror to this day. It continues to function as both a driver and a result of forced displacement. It is thus our primary responsibility to address conflict-related sexual violence at all stages of the prevention, protection and prosecution nexus.

The Government of Georgia has been carrying out its national action plans for implementing the Security Council's resolutions on women and peace and security since 2012. Our most recent plan covers the inclusion of the needs, priorities and recommendations of internally displaced women and women affected by conflict in peace and security efforts, as well as women's increased participation of women in the Geneva international discussions and in the mechanisms for preventing and responding to incidents of sexual violence. To that end, the participants in the Geneva international discussions and the prevention and response mechanisms meet and consult regularly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, including those specializing in the protection of women's rights. To further support women affected by conflict, the Government of Georgia has launched a project aimed at empowering them economically by expanding their knowledge and enhancing the practical skills they need to start their own businesses.

Gender equality is an essential pillar of military and civilian personnel management in Georgia.

Our Ministry of Defence's gender-equality strategy establishes the conditions required to guarantee equal rights, freedoms and opportunities for men and women, prevent and eradicate all forms of discrimination, counter any kind of gender violence and eliminate misconduct, sexual harassment and physical and psychological mistreatment. Today approximately 8 per cent of our armed forces and 49 per cent of Ministry of Defence personnel are women. The gender-equality monitoring team at the Ministry of Defence coordinates gender mainstreaming, the implementation of a gender perspective and the institutionalization and fulfilment of national and international obligations. The team is also engaged in implementing measures designed to prevent domestic violence perpetrated by representatives of the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry has further improved its legislative base to ensure accountability for sexual harassment by military servicemen, and has introduced a mandatory training course for all employees on the elimination of sexual harassment in the workplace. Training on gender perspectives and resolution 1325 (2000) has been part of predeployment training for peacekeepers since 2014, and more than 5,000 military servicemen and -women have been trained so far. Gender and domestic violence issues are also included in sessions on post-traumatic stress disorder held by Ministry of Defence psychologists following deployment.

Despite the Government's efforts to promote the full inclusion in the peace process of women affected by conflict, the ongoing occupation of Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions by the Russian Federation hinders the peace process and imposes severe conditions on women living in Georgia's occupied regions, as well as in areas adjacent to the occupation line. Those areas are systematically subject to human rights violations, including the denial of the right to freedom of movement, illegal detentions by Russian FSB officers and threats to physical security for so-called illegal border crossings. International engagement and monitoring of the situation inside the conflict-affected regions, and the occupied regions of Georgia in particular, are thus crucial to ensuring substantive gender equality and preventing sexual violence against women.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Guillermet-Fernandez (Costa Rica) (spoke in Spanish): Costa Rica thanks the German presidency for

convening this open debate. We also thank the briefers for their valuable contributions to this debate.

My delegation endorses the statement made earlier by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect.

We also join others in condemning the horrendous attacks committed in Sri Lanka this past Sunday. We stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of Sri Lanka.

Sexual violence is unacceptable at any time and place, and its widespread use as a tactic of terror and a weapon of war and terrorism is especially deplorable. It is therefore essential to address its causes, as well as the structural gaps in our systems, to ensure that it is eradicated in a systematic and robust way. The primary responsibility for protecting populations rests with States, which must establish robust legal and institutional frameworks in order to lay firm foundations to prevent and address the existing gaps in victim protection. While women and girls deserve special attention, we must also expand the scope of protection measures to include the most vulnerable populations, including ethnic and religious minorities, women in rural areas, women and girls associated with armed groups, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex population and men and boys, who are equally vulnerable to sexual violence. Sexual violence as a cause of forced displacement is equally worrying, as are the growing risks of violence in situations of mass movements, where migrants, refugees and displaced persons are subject to sexual extortion, human trafficking, assault and rape, among other abuses. It is important to consider conflict-related sexual violence when awarding refugee status or asylum, with policies on victim assistance and the provision of adequate protection for such populations.

Any act of sexual violence must be punished with the utmost firmness through the rigorous application of existing international legal mechanisms including, if applicable, referral to the International Criminal Court, with a view to completely eradicating impunity in these cases. These acts of violence are war crimes, which is why a rigorous zero-tolerance policy is required for those who commit, order or condone sexual violence in conflict situations.

Similarly, amnesties and immunities for this type of crime should be prohibited, as should procedural and evidentiary impediments to justice for victims,

especially the restrictive statute of limitations for filing complaints, as well as the intimidation or discrediting of victims. Similarly, transitional justice arrangements should be included in peace and ceasefire agreements.

The use of sanctions in cases of sexual violence in the context of armed conflict and terrorism should be consistent. For this to be effective, relevant sanctions committees should deploy sexual and gender-based violence specialists as part of their investigative work, recommending measures applied under international law to target all those involved in financing, planning or supporting groups with connections to acts of sexual violence, be they civilian or military.

Prevention is key. The systematic inclusion of women's protection advisers in the strategic planning processes of political missions, peace operations and mediation is essential. We highlight the work done by Justice Rapid Response in partnership with UN-Women and its roster of judicial experts on gender-based sexual violence in processes to ensure criminal justice and accountability in conflict situations. In addition, more women should be incorporated into national police forces and political and peacekeeping missions, with adequate training in prevention and response to cases of sexual violence, in recognition of the positive correlation between reporting rates of sexual violence and the number of women in such contingents.

It is essential that all the foregoing efforts be focused on the victims. There must therefore be a guarantee of multisectoral assistance for survivors of sexual violence, including medical services, including access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care, as well as psychosocial and legal services. In this regard, we regret that resolution 2467 (2019), adopted today in the Council, excluded this provision on health, since access to services and sexual and reproductive health is essential to guarantee the dignity of the victim of sexual violence.

Legal frameworks must be established at the national level to protect victims and combat the stigma associated with sexual violence and abuse, where reparations and compensation are provided, taking into consideration that different forms of sexual violence require different solutions and responses. The meaningful participation of survivors and civil society, including women's and women-led organizations, should also be encouraged as a central element of prevention.

Finally, it is essential to involve women and girls in decision-making processes and leadership positions. The lack of opportunities, the dearth of national policies for their protection and inclusion, and structural barriers in all areas that promote discrimination against women perpetuate circles of poverty, exclusion and cycles of violence, inhibiting the enjoyment of their rights. We welcome the framework for cooperation between the Office of the Special Representative and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women in recognition that conflict-related sexual violence is intrinsically linked to structural gender inequalities and discrimination. It is therefore necessary to guarantee equal opportunities, access to education and the economic, political and social empowerment of women and girls so that they can assume a transcendental and transforming role in their communities during and after conflicts, enabling them to regain their dignity and the full enjoyment of their rights.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Let me commend you, Mr. President, for the hard work of your delegation in bringing the negotiations on resolution 2467 (2019) to a successful conclusion. Allow me to offer a few short remarks at the end of a long day.

In the first instance, we want to refer to some of the situations that are particularly relevant for our discussions today. In Myanmar, there have been patterns of widespread atrocities, including sexual violence, against Rohingya women and girls. There is strong evidence that the threat and use of sexual violence have been a push factor for forced displacement on a massive scale. We would like to hear from the Special Representative how we can best address the increasing prevalence of children born of wartime rape and provide necessary services to mothers and children without contributing to their stigmatization. In Libya, migrant women and girls are very vulnerable to conflict-related sexual violence. Many are exposed to forced prostitution and sexual exploitation, amounting to conditions of sexual slavery. In Syria, displacement camps pose a high risk of sexual violence and abduction for women and girls. Such violence during arrest predominantly affects women and girls residing in the home of a targeted male, while both males and females are among the victims in detention settings.

Secondly, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to conflict-related sexual violence, but research, including by the All Survivors Project, documents that men and boys are also specifically targeted, for example, in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. And yet sexual violence against men and boys remains seriously underreported, due to a culture of taboo and the stigmatization of the victims, which also restrains them in their already limited access to services. We welcome the progress made today in the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019) to ensure timely and safe survivor-centred assistance for all survivors, including psychosocial and health-care services.

Thirdly, we reiterate our strong commitment to the fight against human trafficking and modern slavery, for which conflict situations pose a special risk. We support in the particular the call in resolution 2331 (2016) to engage all relevant stakeholders in the fight against illicit financial flows stemming from human trafficking, including sexual slavery. This call has paved the way for the Liechtenstein Initiative for a Financial Sector Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, a public-private partnership, carried out in cooperation with the Governments of Australia and the Netherlands and with support from the United Nations University. This work will result in a set of measures for the global financial sector that will be presented publicly in September in New York.

My final point relates to the importance of accountability as an essential part of the fight against conflict-related sexual violence. States have the primary responsibility in this respect, but international criminal justice mechanisms, in particular the International Criminal Court, can significantly contribute to strengthening national capacities, as called for in Sustainable Development Goal 16, on the basis of the principle of complementarity. The Court has made sexual and gender-based crimes one of its strategic priorities, which is a reflection of the very progressive stance of the Court's founding Statute on this issue. There is a particular responsibility for the Security Council to ensure accountability for these crimes, in accordance with the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group code of conduct against mass atrocity crimes, supported by two thirds of the Council's membership.

We also commend the work of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria,

whose annual report was discussed in the General Assembly today (see A/73/PV.76). It has already made significant progress in operationalizing its mandate to effectively address sexual and gender-based crimes. We expect the accountability mechanism established by the Human Rights Council for Myanmar to build on this good practice.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): First of all, let me express our heartfelt condolences to the people and the Government of Sri Lanka on the heinous terrorist attack perpetrated on innocent civilians by cowardly groups. We condemn it in the strongest terms, and we stand in solidarity with the people and Government of Sri Lanka.

We are greatly indebted to Germany for organizing this important debate on the women and peace and security agenda and the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. We must also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive tenth annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2019/280), as well as all those who have provided briefings for us this morning. The report of the Secretary-General clearly highlights the current trends and our concerns about sexual violence in conflict. We sincerely hope that it will allow us to draw up a clear framework of commitment and seriously address the challenges involved in the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.

Sexual exploitation, abuse and violence in conflict situations demands the strongest possible actions and responses. One of those responses must be the mobilization of international efforts to galvanize effective and organized prevention measures to deal with those challenges. We all know that sexual violence is a common part of the tactics of terrorist organizations in conflict and post-conflict situations everywhere. The need to intensify efforts to prevent such violence and hold accountable those who are responsible requires global attention. At the same time, as reports from the United Nations peacekeeping missions in Africa currently make clear, it is Africans who are most affected by this problem today. It is obvious that we need to apply much greater efforts to stop the activities of armed groups and other parties to conflict. We must take action — urgent action — to deal with those areas.

In the context of Africa, we strongly welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation of engaging religious and traditional leaders to help mitigate the

suffering of survivors. Equally, we believe that a central part of any recovery plan must be to strengthen the capacity of the national institutions of conflict-affected countries by providing finance and technical expertise for their prevention efforts.

The Security Council should continue to encourage prevention and capacity-building to address the root causes of conflict. Those, of course, include persistent problems of gender inequality and even backward discriminatory practices. There is also a very real need to encourage and promote the meaningful participation of civil society organizations. They are absolutely necessary to bring about changes in structural gender inequality practices. The Council should employ all and every means at its disposal and make every effort to enhance and sustain a global response against conflict-related sexual violence.

In that connection, the African Union (AU) has demonstrated its commitment to fighting impunity and holding accountable those responsible for conflict-related sexual violence. One aspect of that should be the continuous training of all peacekeeping personnel, whether on United Nations or AU missions, on issues related to gender and conflict-related sexual violence. I am glad to be able to say that that has been prioritized in Ethiopia's deployment of peacekeepers.

Finally, let me once again affirm the commitment of Ethiopia to criminalizing sexual violence and working with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and others, to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to increasing women's representation in United Nations activities, whether as special representatives and envoys, in field operations or among military observers, police and human rights and humanitarian personnel. We also appreciate and support his suggested measures to prevent conflict-related sexual violence and his call for a policy of zero tolerance. At the same time, we reiterate the necessity that we should agree to a strong and clear framework of action to respond effectively to these challenges.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cambodia.

Mr. Ke (Cambodia): Allow me to express my condolences and sympathy for those who lost beloved family members in the recent terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka. Cambodia strongly condemns the attacks and

remains united with the Government and people of Sri Lanka during this difficult period.

At the outset, I would like to thank Germany for having convened today's highly important debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his informative report (S/2019/280) on conflict-related sexual violence, as well as to express my delegation's appreciation to the briefers for their insightful presentations on the subject this morning.

The use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and a means of repression, terror and control is reprehensible. My delegation strongly condemns all forms of sexual violence and exploitation, especially against women and children. In order to prevent the victimization of women and girls, we must address the deep-rooted causes of conflict. Conflict prevention is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and respect for human rights. Poverty, discrimination, a lack of education, social exclusion and inequality perpetuate the cycle of violence.

In that light, the international community must come together in addressing these issues in a purposeful and comprehensive manner. The timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can provide real, long-lasting means of protection for women and girls in times of conflict and in times of peace. Women are the bedrock of global socioeconomic development, yet despite the many advances, inequality still persists. The successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those addressing gender equality, the promotion of quality education and inclusive economic growth, can empower women and aid in achieving their full potential.

Cambodia is fully committed to advancing the goals of gender equality, prosperity and peace. For our part, we have spared no effort in addressing human security threats, as we have contributed to global peace and stability through our active participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Cambodian peacekeepers do their utmost to safeguard and protect local populations from sexual violence and abuse by upholding peace, preserving the rule of law and helping to build safe and secure communities. Cambodia supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy for crimes committed by United Nations personnel on missions.

In that context, Cambodia supports the Secretary-General's recommendation contained in his report

that the continued training of all peacekeeping personnel on issues relating to gender and conflict-related sexual violence is of paramount importance. In order to ensure the effectiveness of operations and make peacekeeping missions a success, peacekeepers should be professionally trained, be provided with reliable field support and have access to necessary modern technology.

Cambodia stands with the Secretary-General in his efforts to strengthen prevention by ensuring the criminal accountability of perpetrators. On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), it is necessary to strengthen accountability mechanisms, noting the resolution's call on all parties to armed conflict to fully respect international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls.

In our efforts to stamp out sexual violence and abuse, the United Nations and its Member States must work together in an open and cooperative manner. We should strengthen the existing legal instruments for the protection of women and girls in armed conflicts by mainstreaming a gender perspective while promoting survivor-focused care. Moreover, given that the Secretary-General acknowledges that it is difficult to ascertain the exact prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence owing to a range of challenges, it is paramount that reporting and recommendation documents be based on accurate, verifiable data. Clarity in reporting will aid in our understanding and help inform our action, thereby strengthening the rule of law at the national and international levels.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Cambodia's unwavering resolve to protect vulnerable populations in situations of armed conflict. Ending sexual violence against women and girls requires joint global action, and Cambodia is fully committed to working with all our partners to ensure that future generations live free and in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Iteboje (Nigeria): I thank the delegation of Germany for organizing today's open debate. Our special appreciation goes to Secretary-General António Guterres for his remarks. We thank Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the other briefers for sharing their perspectives on this very important subject.

Nigeria condemns in the strongest terms the abduction, trafficking and maltreatment of women and girls by extremist groups, including the heinous activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, particularly in north-eastern Nigeria. The use of women and girls as sex slaves must also be equally condemned. In that regard, it is our expectation that this debate will offer suggestions to address the prevailing challenges and gaps in acquiring the resources needed to advance the role of women within the context of the global peace and security architecture.

It is worthy of note that next year we will mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which was initiated during Namibia's presidency of the Security Council in 2000. We acknowledge that by adopting resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council provided the leadership necessary to give impetus to involving women in the peace and security agenda and laid the foundation for subsequent Security Council resolutions on this very important issue.

In Africa, the African Union (AU) has been a useful platform for the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda by placing emphasis on the engagement of women and youth in the continent's development. That is clearly reflected in Agenda 2063 of the African Union. We are proud to note that 25 African States have a national action plan on women and peace and security, which constitutes 31 per cent of countries with a national action plan globally. In addition, there are numerous AU and African subregional instruments that advance the women and peace and security agenda.

At the subregional level, in West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa, developed an integrated plan of action in September 2010 for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The plan of action emphasizes the importance of the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, mediation and peacebuilding efforts, as well as the rebuilding of post-conflict societies.

Building on those subregional efforts, in August 2013 Nigeria launched a national action plan to fully implement the relevant provisions of resolution 1325 (2000). The plan reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring the security of women and girls during armed conflicts and to enhancing their active and direct participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We are also collaborating with our

neighbours Chad, Cameroon, the Niger and Benin, within the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), to defeat the Boko Haram insurgency, which is targeting women and girls. Our experience in the Lake Chad region today is evidence that, with determined international collaboration, terrorism can be defeated. We therefore call on the international community to continue to support the MNJTF.

In addition, the Government of Nigeria has taken steps to cater to victims of Boko Haram terrorism — in the form of rape and other sexual violence against children, the abduction of children and other grave violations — by putting in motion several remedies. Some legal and social remedies undertaken by the Government include the diligent prosecution of detained Boko Haram terrorists in competent courts of law, as well as reintegration, reorientation and rehabilitation programmes designed to meet the needs of each victim of sexual violence.

The sustained efforts of Nigeria and its international partners have culminated in the liberation of territories previously occupied by Boko Haram. We have taken concrete steps to meet the humanitarian needs of internally displaced persons and to ensure that the necessary conditions are established to enable their voluntary return to their places of origin in safety and dignity. As a sequel to the aforementioned efforts, we recall the release of the abducted Chibok and Dapchi girls. Our efforts will continue until the remaining ones are released.

I would like to conclude by acknowledging the contributions of civil society organizations as partners in the prevention, management and resolution of disputes. The Nigerian Government will continue to engage them as key stakeholders and partners in the women and peace and security agenda. Nigeria remains firmly committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. In that regard, we will work assiduously to enhance the participation of women in peace and security initiatives.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Kayinamura (Rwanda): Allow us to join other Member States in congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, as well as for convening this important debate. I also thank all the briefers for their useful briefings.

From a Rwandan perspective, this open debate comes at an important time in Rwandan history. This month of April marks 25 years since the genocide against the Tutsi, where rape was widely used in carrying out the genocide. I will make my statement today with that context in mind.

It was in 1998, at the trial of a genocide convict, Jean-Paul Akayesu — a former commune mayor in Rwanda — that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda concluded and ruled, for the first time, that rape was used as a means of perpetrating genocide aimed at exterminating a targeted group and therefore constituted an act of genocide, of which Akayesu was convicted. Therefore, if we are going to address the widespread use of sexual violence in conflict as a weapon of war, terrorism, ethnic cleansing and even for the extermination of targeted groups, then we need to address the central issue of the culture of impunity, which has become the default response to sexual violence in conflict. Fighting impunity contributes to the prevention of future crimes and the healing and reintegration of survivors in their communities.

My second point concerns prevention, and I would like to make the following recommendations. First, the prevention of sexual violence begins with strong institutions and comprehensive legal frameworks during times of peace. National judicial institutions and legal instruments should be robust enough to address cases of sexual violence on an equal footing with other criminal offences. Secondly, the Security Council should consider expanding the designation criteria for individuals who perpetrate sexual violence in the context of conflicts. Relevant sanctions committees should work closely with the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in order to regularly appraise cases of sexual violence. Thirdly, we should invest in survivor-centred approaches that prioritize the rights and special needs of victims of sexual and gender-based violence. That entails the provision of appropriate medical, social and economic reintegration support in order to reinstate the social fabric of the societies in which we live. Fourthly, it is equally important to involve women in conflict resolution, peace agreement negotiations, peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding and reconciliation at all levels.

My third point is on the survivor-centred approach, which has already been mentioned. Survivors of sexual violence face an uphill task in recovering and rebuilding their lives. Their experience of sexual violence leaves

lasting marks of psychological and social trauma. They have to deal with sexually transmitted diseases, which create extensive health problems that are difficult to address in post-conflict societies. We need a more holistic and effective support system for survivors that will enable them to move from being victims to being resilient survivors and empowered members of our communities.

The pain and trauma are also inherited by the children who are conceived and born out of rape. As they grow through adulthood, they try to come to terms with an identity that no parent would wish for their child. Those children also require extensive psychosocial services to help guide them through their unique experiences.

In closing, allow us to make the following suggestions.

First, we need to improve our understanding of the ideology behind sexual violence in conflicts. The bodies of women, girls and children from targeted groups have become the new battlefields where wars are fought, with the intention of destroying the social fabric of targeted communities. Secondly, we need to scale up the accountability of leaders of armed groups or politicians promoting or enabling the use of sexual violence in armed conflict. Even if justice cannot undo the atrocious crimes of sexual violence, without justice there cannot be an end to the culture of impunity and the cycle of violence may continue. Lastly, in the provision of justice and support for victims and survivors, we need survivor-centred support in order to shift the shame and stigma onto the perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict.

The President: Before I give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka, please allow me — and I think I can speak on behalf of everyone in the Chamber — to convey our sympathy and heartfelt condolences for the victims of the heinous attacks committed in that country. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families.

I now give the floor on the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mrs. Samarasinghe (Sri Lanka): On behalf of my delegation, let me first express our heartfelt gratitude to all those delegations that have extended their condolences and support to the Government and people of Sri Lanka at this difficult time, as we face an unprecedented challenge.

We congratulate Germany, as President of the Council for the month of April, on having organized this debate, especially as we approach the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/280) and the briefers for their valuable comments.

As a troop-contributing country, Sri Lanka has taken many steps with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, including by joining the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership, signing the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and contributing to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

The long, drawn-out conflict that Sri Lanka experienced has left deep-seated scars on our society. Women were major victims. Orphans, war widows, single mothers and women-headed households were the legacy of that conflict. Heightened vulnerabilities, especially during conflict, render women and girls far more susceptible to violence, and my delegation strongly condemns violence, intimidation, harassment and abuse directed towards women in all its forms and manifestations, whenever they occur.

As Sri Lanka engages in rebuilding our society and healing our communities through reconciliation and justice mechanisms, we are committed to addressing the immediate concerns of women and girls by empowering them, providing them a safe space in which to speak out and making them equal participants in all areas of peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Sri Lanka's Administration has approved a set of recommendations presented by the Prime Minister on preventing sexual and gender-based violence. Those recommendations include the formulation and enforcement of laws to combat violence against women and girls and the introduction of social protection measures.

With regard to allegations of sexual violence during the period of the conflict, the Government has established mechanisms to ensure the right to justice. In 2016, Sri Lanka endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Noting the concerns raised regarding alleged sexual violence, a series of directives have been issued by the President of Sri Lanka with regard to alleged human rights violations. Action has also been taken

to prosecute the perpetrators of reported incidences of rape by individual members of the security forces.

There are several action plans that focus on sexual and gender-based violence in the country. In line with the underlying principle of zero tolerance for sexual and gender-based violence in Sri Lanka, the policy framework and national plan of action to address sexual and gender-based violence, launched in November 2016, provide a holistic policy guideline to address the issue of violence against women.

Awareness-raising programmes have also been conducted by the Government, as well as civil society organizations, on zero tolerance for gender-based violence, legal protections and institutional mechanisms for women at the grass-roots level. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs has its own units in former conflict areas. Women development officers and counsellors have taken a keen interest in providing victim-centred rehabilitation for victims of violence. Psychosocial counselling as a healing process is available and given to women victims of violence by the Office of National Unity and Reconciliation.

One recent phenomenon that has emerged regarding sexual and gender-based violence is the request made by civil society organizations to take measures to address the biases that operate against victim survivors as a result of the stigma associated with the incident. They have also requested that the Government develop guidelines to encourage stakeholders to take the initiative to act with responsibility in order to enable victim survivors and their families to participate in society as equals.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Suan (Myanmar): The Government of Myanmar, in building a people-centred democratic nation, places the promotion and protection of human rights as a high priority on its political agenda. The Government upholds its policy of zero tolerance for any form of sexual violence, including conflict-related ones. The root causes of conflict-related sexual violence lie in the lack of peace and stability. We are therefore putting our utmost efforts into the cessation of conflicts and building sustainable peace and national reconciliation. Allow me to briefly share the efforts made in recent months by the Myanmar Government in the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.

Based on the Government's firm commitment to addressing this issue and in the spirit of cooperation with the United Nations, in December last year we signed a joint communiqué with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. Soon after signing the joint communiqué, the Government of Myanmar facilitated the visit of Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Patten, and her team to Myanmar in February. In March, a ministerial-level national committee on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence was formed to implement the joint communiqué, and the first national committee meeting was held subsequently. The national action plan will be drafted with technical assistance from the United Nations.

To transform the zero-tolerance policy against sexual violence into action, domestic legal reform is essential for the effective implementation of the protection of the rights of women and girls. In this regard, a law on the prevention of violence against and the protection of women has been drafted and will soon be enacted by Parliament. The new law stipulates the need to protect women from all forms of violence, including domestic abuse, marital rape, sexual violence, harassment by stalking, harassment in the workplace and public places, and violence through traditional and customary practices.

The Government has regularly submitted reports relating to actions taken on the protection of the rights of women and the prevention of sexual violence against women and girls to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and has also them included in the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Committee. We are also working closely with UN-Women in formulating and implementing our national strategic plan on the advancement of women for the period 2013-2022 for gender equality and women's empowerment.

With regard to the alleged sexual violence committed against women, an independent commission of enquiry was established to investigate all allegations of human rights violations following the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army terrorist attacks in August 2017 in northern Rakhine. The mandate of the commission is to seek accountability and reconciliation. The commission is carrying out its mandate with independence, impartiality and objectivity.

The commission has publicly invited submissions on the allegation of human rights. The commission will soon be visiting Cox's Bazar, in Bangladesh, to meet with alleged victims of sexual abuse. The commission's work will be evidence-based. Therefore, the international community should support the work of the commission, which will submit its final report to the Office of the President towards the end of the year. The Government of Myanmar is capable and willing to address accountability in cases of sexual violence. Action will be taken in accordance with the law where there is sufficient evidence.

Much as we all condemn conflict-related sexual violence, we must respond in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly with regard to the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue and negotiation, respect for the sovereignty of countries and recognition of their primary responsibility to maintain peace and security and uphold the rule of law.

In tackling the issue of sexual violence in conflict, the international community should be guided by the universally accepted norms of impartiality, non-selectivity and non-politicization of the issue. A constructive approach through dialogue and providing assistance to the country concerned would bring about positive results in efforts to resolve the problem. Exerting unfair pressure upon a country, solely based on unrealistic lofty human rights standards without giving any due regard to the condition of the country concerned, would surely fail and be met with total rejection from the people of that country.

The first obligation of international actors, whether they are a United Nations agency, an international non-governmental organization, a civil society organization or a media outlet, is to do no harm. Often and regrettably, so much damage has been done due to the predetermined political agendas of some countries and organizations that apply double standards by abusing United Nations systems with a biased attitude.

Let me just give one example of how much damage can be done to a country by the international community and the international media in a crisis situation. I am quoting from an article by Jacob Goldberg entitled "When the story comes before the survivor", which appeared in the 21 February issue of the *Columbia Journalism Review*. It says:

“In October 2017, a refugee woman named Rajuma Begum, 20, told *The New York Times*’s Jeffrey Gettleman that Myanmar soldiers beat and gang-raped her and shot her mother and brother.”

She told him: “They threw my baby into a fire”. These words have been passionately and repeatedly quoted by the media, human rights activists, many diplomats and even some United Nations officials in an attempt to justify the accusation of alleged atrocities committed by the Myanmar security forces.

But, before Rajuma told Gettleman that her baby was thrown into a fire, she had already told a different version of her story. She told Al Jazeera in September 2017: “They ripped my son from my arms and threw him [on the ground] and cut his throat”. Later, she told others that her baby had been killed with a machete, making no mention of the fire. In any case, the damage had been done. This is just one example among endless fake and manufactured accounts with the malicious intent to tarnish the image of the Government and the people of Myanmar. If we are to succeed in our effort to end sexual violence in conflict, we must rise above the politicization and dramatization of the violence.

As for Myanmar, we shall continue to engage and work constructively with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to achieve our objective of ending sexual violence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Seifi Pargou (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the German presidency of the Council for convening this open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their valuable input.

Sexual violence in armed conflict — a method often used as a tactic of war and terrorism — is a brutal crime. Unfortunately, women and girls are its main victims. The prevention of this inhumane practice requires a collective effort. That, however, cannot be successful without addressing its root causes, meaning the occurrence of armed conflict itself. Accordingly, the ultimate solution to prevent such crimes is to suppress armed conflicts altogether. As long as terrorism, violent extremism, foreign occupation and foreign intervention exist, such a solution remains, regrettably, out of reach.

The current global environment is increasingly becoming fertile ground for raising conflict over peace. Destructive advocates of hatred, racism, discrimination

and unilateralism are uniting against the proponents of win-win multilateral solutions. This is most certainly not a promising development for women and girls, most of whom may continue to find themselves, here or there, sooner or later, in the midst of another horrific armed conflict and inevitably face the cruel cycle of violence, including sexual violence.

The question must be raised, then, as to who is responsible for the current situation. Indeed, it is the politicians who are putting their delusionary geopolitical interests ahead of the lives of innocent women and girls in other countries, thereby shaping the landscape that makes this current situation possible. It is therefore essential that these aforementioned politicians change their disastrous foreign policy options and stop manufacturing armed conflicts. Shedding crocodile tears for women and children who have fallen victim to the conflicts created by them or by their allies cannot veil their direct responsibilities.

In our volatile region, the Middle East, for instance, foreign occupation, foreign invasion and terrorism — which have no respect for women’s rights and lives — are the core threat to their security. While every effort should be made to prevent conflicts, which are the main root cause of sexual violence in armed conflicts, we also need to take other measures to prevent and respond to such crimes. In this context, it is essential that our efforts be focused on ensuring the criminal accountability of such perpetrators. Likewise, the access of survivors to justice must be ensured. We should fight against impunity for conflict-related sexual violence. In this regard, we support proposals to exclude crimes of sexual violence from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution.

In conclusion, we underline the need to empower women and promote their role in conflict prevention and resolution. The realization of this noble objective is a collective responsibility and we stand ready to contribute to any genuine international effort to that end.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mrs. Tripathi (India): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate. We thank all the briefers for sharing their experiences and insights.

Let me begin by condemning the serial blasts in Sri Lanka and extending our deepest condolences to the families of the victims, the Government and the people of Sri Lanka.

Despite commendable advances both in policy and practice in combating sexual violence, a gap between what is recommended and the reality in the field remains. We need to better understand the dynamic complexities that manifest as sexual violence in armed conflict in order to prevent the atrocities, end the culture of impunity and rehabilitate and reintegrate survivors.

Our experience of appalling atrocities perpetrated with impunity against women by the armed forces of a State in our immediate neighbourhood in 1971 remains vivid. The scars from these wounds are yet to heal. The call for justice has reverberated at the high-level general debate annually by a strong woman leader who remains steadfast in reminding the international community of the sexual violence committed against women of her country. The perpetrators of these crimes are now masquerading as champions of justice in order to cover their mistakes.

We would like to make the following five points on today's theme of discussion.

First, a robust framework for accountability against sexual violence in armed conflicts must seek to include all actors, irrespective of their affiliations and motivations. The conceptualization of sexual violence primarily as a tactic of war has become pervasive. It is based on historical evidence and we are not disputing the assertion, yet restricting our understanding to the notion of instrumentality of sexual violence in armed conflicts runs the risk of rendering the other victims of such atrocities invisible. These invisible victims could include boys and men or those violated by civilians and humanitarian actors with other motivations. The framework for accountability and reparation must address their suffering.

Secondly, a fragmented conceptualization of sexual violence in armed conflicts often leads to the decoupling of the issue from its sociocultural, economic and political contexts. Interventions based on limited considerations typically attempt to treat the symptoms, rather than the underlying ailment. Our understanding of the nexus between terrorism, trafficking and sexual violence must inform action in this regard. The Council must push for greater cooperation on

countering terrorism and the effective implementation of sanctions regimes.

Thirdly, the United Nations must prioritize support to national Governments to adopt stronger legal, administrative and justice systems for protecting the rights of victims, prosecuting perpetrators and addressing the long-term consequences of abuses towards the individual, the family and the community.

Fourthly, the greater participation of women in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation processes needs to be promoted to address deep-rooted inequality and subordination in society. Treating victims, their families and communities as mere beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance disempowers them. Strengthening the role of locally led civil society organizations is therefore pivotal to sustainable solutions.

Fifthly, mainstreaming the gender perspective in peace operations and increasing women's representation in peacekeeping are prerequisites for prevention and response. In this regard, India welcomes the uniformed gender-parity strategy to increase the number of women peacekeepers and is ready to deploy a female engagement team to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a women formed police unit to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan this year.

To conclude, improving the Security Council's response to sexual violence in armed conflicts cannot be pursued in isolation. The normative work done outside the Council regarding equal rights and the empowerment of women must continue to inform our discussions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I would like to thank Foreign Minister Maas and Germany for convening today's open debate. The high-level participation in this discussion on sexual violence in conflict, as well as the late hour due to the very long list of speakers today, is a testament to the global importance of this issue to many Member States.

We all agree that sexual violence in conflict is a particularly heinous and vicious crime, as well as a threat to international peace and security. We have heard, however, how some armed groups continue to use sexual-based violence as a tactic of war, with

no fear of consequence, in order to subjugate and humiliate their opponents or to retain recruits. As the Council has heard, Da'esh in our region is particularly notorious for these actions and, despite its recent loss of territories and defeats, not a single member of that terrorist group has been held accountable for the sexual violence it has inflicted, as poignantly described in Nadia Murad's brave testimony this morning. Similarly, it is unconscionable that no one has been punished for the sexual violence directed against the Rohingya. As the Secretary-General mentioned earlier, women and girls were gang-raped in their homes before they were forced to flee Myanmar. Ending impunity is indeed an essential deterrent against future crimes.

Beyond the trauma that conflict-related sexual violence causes, it contributes to the dangerous cycle of insecurity and inequality that impedes the participation of survivors — predominantly women — in peace processes. Via resolution 1325 (2000), United Nations Member States have committed to increasing the participation of women across the peace-development continuum, recognizing the crucial role of women in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. I would like to share what my country, the United Arab Emirates, is doing to try and help in its small way.

Earlier this year, the United Arab Emirates and UN-Women launched a military and peacekeeping training programme for Arab women at the women's military academy in the United Arab Emirates. The programme aims to build the capacity of women in our region and will strengthen the pipeline of women for deployment to peacekeeping operations in the future. The first cohort of women, 134 in total, recently completed the training, and we will expand the programme to include women trainees from countries beyond the Arab region as part of our global commitment.

Meaningful participation in peace processes requires an enabling and encouraging environment for survivors to tell their stories, as we have heard today. The majority of those survivors are women and girls. Few of them come forward because of the perceived shame, fear of rejection and lack of resources, among a number of other factors. To address these challenges, we need a survivor-centred approach, as recognized by resolution 2467 (2019), adopted today. We need to raise awareness of the stigma surrounding rape and offer resources and support in a way that empowers survivors. The United Arab Emirates has financially supported the excellent work of the Special Representative's Team of Experts

on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and we encourage other Member States to do the same.

In our efforts to further the women and peace and security agenda in the next phase of implementation beyond 2020, I am pleased to announce that the United Arab Emirates will shortly launch a panel series, with the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, to examine the important role of women across the social, political, and economic components of post-conflict reconstruction and to elevate research and better inform data-driven policy and practice. It is a critically underresearched area of the women and peace and security agenda and we look forward to sharing the outcomes of the project with Member States.

Ending conflict-related sexual violence, as envisioned by resolution 1820 (2008), is a daunting task but a moral imperative for us all. Member States should implement the Secretary-General's recommendations on conflict-related sexual violence, and we believe they should prioritize the following three actions. First, we should focus on documenting and tracking cases of conflict-related sexual violence. Without evidence and data, it is impossible to measure the effectiveness of our efforts to eradicate sexual violence and hold individuals accountable. Secondly, we should support national efforts to address impunity in States currently in conflict or in a reconstruction phase, as Amal Clooney called for this morning. That includes strengthening the capacity of national investigative and judicial bodies, as well as supporting and increasing the number of women protection advisers in United Nations missions. Thirdly, we should mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment in our foreign policy and development programming. The United Arab Emirates has set a goal of ensuring that all of its foreign assistance programming includes a gender component by 2021, and we encourage others to establish similarly ambitious targets.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

Mr. Kemayah (Liberia): My delegation brings warm greetings from His Excellency Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, and congratulates you, Sir, on your assumption of the Security Council presidency for the month of April. We commend the Security Council for its adoption earlier today of resolution 2467 (2019), on sexual

violence in conflict. Liberia is proud to have been one of its sponsors.

We also want to reiterate our empathy and sympathy for the Government and the people of Sri Lanka and the families of the victims of the recent tragic terrorist attacks.

We would like to thank the Security Council, under Germany's presidency, for hosting this stimulating debate and we thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and the briefers for their inspiring contributions, which truly reflect their unrelenting efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a tactic of warfare. On this tenth anniversary of the mandate of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Government of Liberia would like to express its appreciation for the constructive efforts that have been undertaken under that mandate, including its assistance to Liberia in our efforts to strengthen our national legislation and our justice system's capacity.

The Government of Liberia remains resolute in its ownership and leadership of the security and welfare of its State and people. One of the peacebuilding objectives of our new development framework, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, aims to sustain peace and promote social cohesion through the increased participation of women in every area. Regrettably, however, in an alarming phenomenon that the Government of Liberia is very concerned about, sexual violence is a persistent remnant of our period of conflict. For many years women were excluded from political and development processes, and a climate of impunity for acts of sexual violence made matters worse. Today we realize the importance of addressing issues of impunity and accountability that impede deterrence and prevention, as well as addressing the root causes that fuel the recurrence of sexual violence. The Government of Liberia is poised to embark on the following objectives.

First, we will adopt our second national action plan on women and peace and security and ensure budgetary support for its implementation. Secondly, we will reconstitute the national and county steering committees to promote the localization of resolution 1325 (2000), with a view to effectively raising awareness and improving our national implementation of it. Thirdly, we will establish gender units in nine ministries and agencies to ensure the effective mainstreaming of gender into their institutional frameworks. We will also

lobby and enhance our collaboration with the national legislature to ratify the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, ensure the entry into force of our domestic violence bill and increase women's access to landownership. With the effective achievement of those objectives in view, the Government of Liberia is collaborating with UN-Women, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations to implement a number of initiatives on women's empowerment, the political engagement of young people, justice and human rights and the peaceful management of concession-related conflicts, with support from the Peacebuilding Fund.

Today Liberia's iconic Peace Huts continue to be a potent traditional mechanism for conflict mediation and resolution and early-warning systems. We have also received financing from the Peacebuilding Fund to support the strengthening of participants' negotiation and mediation skills. Dialogues in community Peace Huts have focused on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, drug abuse, education, land disputes, health services and illegal movements at the borders.

Combating sexual violence requires a collaborative, multi-stakeholder and multisectoral approach. The Government of Liberia is committed to leveraging that approach and remains grateful to the United Nations and our development partners for their continued support and assistance as we earnestly endeavour to ensure that Liberia remains a secure country of inclusion and equality for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Yáñez Loza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Ecuador thanks the German presidency for the timely convening of this open debate on the devastating problem of sexual violence in armed conflict. We are grateful to the Secretary-General and the briefers for their statements this morning. We would particularly like to recognize the work of Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Nadia Murad, who were rightly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year for their selflessness in supporting and caring for victims of sexual violence and for bringing the world's attention to the fact that such crimes must not go unpunished.

As the Secretary-General's annual report (S/2019/280) outlines, sexual violence against women, girls and young boys is an alarming trend that continues to affect millions. It is used as a tactic of war and terrorism and as an instrument of political repression. We agree with the Secretary-General's statement in paragraph 3 of the report that

“[p]reventing sexual violence requires the advancement of substantive gender equality before, during and after conflict, including by ensuring women's full and effective participation in political, economic and social life and ensuring accessible and responsive justice and security institutions.”

We also believe that in order to address sexual violence in armed conflict, a comprehensive and preventive vision is necessary. Member States need to make a collective effort, including legislative and judicial reform, so that those responsible for acts of sexual violence are brought to justice and so that survivors have access to justice, are treated with dignity, benefit from protection and are duly compensated. Of all those elements, the fight against impunity is fundamental, as is the presence of women in mediation processes and decision-making in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

To guarantee the effectiveness, practice and enforceability of women's fundamental rights, Ecuador's legal framework is based on two fundamental pillars — the Constitution, which explicitly acknowledges that Ecuador must consider the measures necessary to prevent, eliminate and sanction all forms of violence, including sexual violence; and the binding international instruments ratified by the State.

The national plan for eliminating gender violence became public policy in 2007 and constitutes one of the pillars of the “Toda una vida” national development plan. In 2018, Ecuador issued a comprehensive constitutional law to prevent and eradicate violence against women, which establishes a comprehensive national system that is structured around and articulated through prevention, care, protection and comprehensive reparation of the rights of victims.

As was voiced by my delegation during the interactive dialogue on commitments under resolution 1325 (2000), my country has continuously promoted initiatives to mainstream gender, particularly through the National Council for Gender Equality, based on its specialized competencies, and through the Ministry

of Defence with regard to managing the School of Peacekeeping Operations, which trains and educates military personnel — men and women alike — for deployment in United Nations peace missions.

Ecuador wishes to express its appreciation for the Secretary-General's various initiatives in this area — the strategy for improving the approach to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse across the system and his zero-tolerance policy in that regard; the voluntary global compact on the commitment to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse, signed by my country in February 2018; the Action for Peacekeeping initiative; and the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse. All of those initiatives complement and reinforce resolution 1325 (2000).

To conclude, I wish to convey to the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict my country's appreciation for its work in recent years and for Ms. Patten's selflessness in that regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): My delegation would like to thank the German presidency for convening today's open debate to consider sexual violence in conflict.

This topic is sadly all too familiar to the members of the Security Council. Reports of the Secretary-General on crisis situations refer regularly to crimes of sexual violence. Used as a weapon of war to subjugate and humiliate victims and cause them physical, emotional and psychological harm, sexual violence also has profoundly negative impacts on the communities to which victims belong and from which they sometimes find themselves ostracized.

Far too often, rape, gang rape and other forms of sexual violence, including unspeakable crimes committed against children and infants, are perpetrated when the rule of law is weak or non-existent and when there is no respect for principles of humanitarian law. What is more, impunity is often the norm and consequently victims are often afraid to speak out. The silence must be broken. We cannot remain indifferent when such widespread cruelty is inflicted on the innocent. Impunity must give way to accountability so that there can be justice and reparation.

The landmark resolution 1325 (2000) demands that parties in armed conflict take special measures to protect women and girls from violence, particularly from rape and other forms of sexual abuse. It also calls for the participation and full involvement of women in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. Indeed, one way that women and girls can help to lay the foundations for durable peace and justice is when their own voices are heard. In particular, survivors of conflict-related sexual violence should be considered experts — their pain should be acknowledged, their strength recognized and their wisdom harnessed.

Terrorist organizations and other non-State actors, including criminal gangs, have committed crimes of sexual violence on a massive scale. We know, however, that they are regrettably not the only perpetrators of such crimes. Members of armed forces and even some who serve under the United Nations flag have, in some instances, added to the misery. My delegation notes with appreciation the initiatives to prevent and combat sexual abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations, including through specialized training of personnel, with the specific aim of reducing risks in host countries through campaigns to enhance sensitivity, promote respect for the dignity of others and encourage populations to speak up.

Those who have suffered conflict-related violence are victims at multiple levels. They are burdened by war and then condemned to carry the marks of that trauma in their own person. Their educational, development and other basic needs are often not met. Among the victims are also men and boys — a reality so taboo in some cultures and contexts that it is hidden and shrouded in even greater silence. To add insult to injury, victims are afraid to speak out in many cases for fear of being shunned by their own communities, indeed by their own families, making their plight even more desperate.

Discussion of this delicate topic inevitably raises the equally sensitive question of children conceived and born as a result of sexual violence in conflict. The human rights of those children need to be respected and guaranteed as they would be for any child. Those young, innocent lives should be welcomed, cherished and given the means necessary to flourish and reach their full human potential. Those children need to be supported and loved, not shamed, stigmatized, banished or, worse still, denied the most basic right to exist and be born.

Our hope is that today's open debate and the attention that it brings to the subject will give more space to survivors and victims to come forward to find healing and hope through the recognition of their personal dignity, and that more robust mechanisms will be established to bring to justice those who have committed violations against them.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to express in this Chamber the Chilean Government's condolences to the people and the Government of Sri Lanka for the cruel terrorist attacks carried out in the country in recent days, as well as our strong condemnation of those crimes.

We appreciate Germany's initiative to convene this open debate and the leadership of Minister Heiko Maas. My delegation would also like to thank the Secretary-General for presenting his report (S/2019/280), the speakers whom we heard this morning and Ms. Pramila Patten for her work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Chile reiterates its commitment to implementing resolutions on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and against the impunity of those crimes, as well as the Secretary-General's initiatives in favour of gender equality and his zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse.

Women and peace and security constitutes one of the priority pillars of Chile's foreign policy. We have therefore promoted stronger regional and global cooperation in establishing public policies that guarantee women the full exercise of their rights, which triggers cultural and structural changes that lead to inclusive societies in which the empowerment of women and the prevention of sexual violence should be at the centre of the international response.

A wider dissemination of measures for prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration is needed to ensure a full understanding of the seriousness of sexual and gender-based violence. Reporting such crimes must also be promoted and protected to effectively combat their impunity. We value the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as the deployment of women's protection advisers in United Nations missions, which has contributed,

among others, to improving the access and quality of available information.

Achieving justice is essential for victims to achieve some degree of spiritual and material reparation. In that regard, we emphasize the work of the International Criminal Court — an instrument that complements the work of national courts and mixed courts in transforming the culture of impunity into one of deterrence. The imprescriptibility of such crimes is also fundamental to fighting against their impunity and for achieving just reparation.

Education programmes at all levels are also necessary for prevention, especially in the armed forces. In that regard, Chile's second national plan has heightened training and education on gender perspectives, sexual violence and human rights of women in peacekeeping operations, both for police and military institutions and for civilian personnel who participate either in those institutions or in conflict and post-conflict resolution processes.

Chile is currently committed to developing its third national action plan for the period 2020-2022 with a view to strengthening the role of women in negotiation, mediation, construction and peacebuilding. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability will also be incorporated with respect to its objectives, as well as the budgetary allocations necessary for its adequate implementation. Its sphere of competence will cover natural catastrophes, humanitarian aid and the displacement of people. We are actively collaborating with civil society and other institutions in its development.

In line with the vision that we have set out, the challenges of the third-generation national plan include increasing the participation of women in peace operations and in leadership and decision-making positions, as well as ensuring the presence of gender advisers in those operations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Paraguay.

Mr. Carrillo Gómez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Paraguay, I welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/280) on conflict-related sexual violence and the initiative of the German presidency of the Council to convene this debate and to begin commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) — a framework resolution aimed at

encouraging the representation of women at all levels of decision-making for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

Like the Secretary-General in his report, we acknowledge that, in order to prevent sexual violence, it is necessary to promote substantive gender equality before, during and after conflicts. In our experience, including women at different levels of decision-making has been a challenging process but one that continues to progress steadily. For example, since 2006, Paraguayan female career officers have been able to graduate from military academy, serving in almost all specialist areas of the army, the air force and the navy. Many of those women have been deployed as part of the Paraguayan contingents in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Women will organically reach the highest ranks of the military, occupy the corresponding positions at different levels of command and be deployed in the country's various military secondments.

Incorporating women into traditionally male roles has been accompanied by active State measures, such as the creation of public policies that are supported by relevant legislation and the provision of the infrastructure necessary for the smooth running of military activity, while making arrangements for the unique needs of women. Through the national education system, the Paraguayan Government has also promoted the population's awareness of the importance of the participation of women in areas traditionally reserved for men.

Finally, we welcome the call made to Member States to assume new commitments for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on the twentieth anniversary of its adoption. In that context, the Republic of Paraguay, through the Ministry of Women, will convene an inter-institutional working group to update Paraguay's national action plan 2013-2017 with a view to implementing resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and re-evaluating it for the upcoming period.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Economic Community of Central African States.

Mrs. Byaje (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), I would like to start by thanking the delegation of Germany for the excellent work carried out during its presidency of the Council during this month of April,

and by wishing you, Mr. President, every success in the work that remains to be done.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as all the other speakers who have preceded me, for their constructive contributions to this open debate.

The choice of today's topic reflects your commitment, Sir, to the protection and advancement of women and girls against sexual violence in conflict situations, within the United Nations humanitarian framework. It is a pledge of your firm commitment to address that worrying question with renewed vigour in order to finally move from words to deeds.

The Economic Community of Central African States congratulates you, Mr. President, on this undertaking and takes the opportunity to commend the concrete initiatives taken by its member States, as well as their sustained political will, as evidenced by the implementation of laws, policies and mechanisms to address abuses of women in conflict-affected areas. ECCAS continues to assure its member States of its full collaboration in the process of aligning national legislation with regional and international instruments.

Despite the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, which have been crucial in raising awareness regarding violence against women and girls during times of conflict and in humanitarian environments in which they are regularly raped and abused with full impunity, nonetheless women and girls continue to be subjected to all kinds of sexual abuse in the midst of conflict, where the use of that inhumane and degrading practice has become the norm and rape is a weapon of war.

It is urgent that we put an end to that trend in the name of the young girls, women and children who are seeing the world crumble around them without any hope of resuming a normal life or having their attackers brought to justice. To that end, a change in our practices and actions in peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, as well as in the protection of civilians, is essential if we are to eradicate the scourge.

It is in that context that ECCAS is striving to consolidate early warning mechanisms to strengthen its capacities in preventing and managing armed conflict by advocating for the participation of women in peace and security processes. It is also for the

sake of contributing to that effort that seven of its 11 member States have adopted national action plans on innovative resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. A regional action plan for the resolution's implementation has also been approved and adopted by member States.

It should also be emphasized that the economic and social empowerment of women is at the heart of all the actions undertaken in the context of national plans, because it is indeed a cross-cutting issue in all sectors. It is therefore imperative, including in the areas of peace, security and inclusive governance, that a favourable climate be established to ensure that women participate actively in mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as in post-conflict building efforts, while benefiting from laws that protect them in armed conflict.

Allow me to recall an example that was highlighted so eloquently by the representative of Rwanda, namely, the 250,000 rape victims of Rwanda — one of our member States — during the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in 1994, who saw their hopes and dreams forever shattered, especially since the majority of them contracted HIV/AIDS. I am also compelled to mention the daily abuses suffered by women in the areas where armed groups thrive in our subregion. Such heinous and humiliating crimes, such as rape, sexual abuse and violence against women in times of conflict, rob victims of all dignity and lead to discrimination against them and stigmatization, while leaving them with moral, physical and psychological wounds.

In order to address the root causes of all forms of violence against women and girls, the following essential steps have been proposed in some of our member States' national plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which should be encouraged and supported: first, allocating resources to prevent sexual abuse and mitigate its consequences, while raising awareness of violence against women in conflict settings; secondly, strengthening social justice mechanisms and creating institutional and legal frameworks to facilitate access to justice, while developing policies to fight impunity; thirdly, monitoring and evaluating progress; fourthly, prosecuting the perpetrators of such crimes and providing support and reparations to survivors of sexual violence; and lastly, ensuring that women are represented in the contingents deployed in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, as well as

in post-conflict building, and sharing good practices with local authorities.

To conclude, the ultimate goal of today's debate can be attained by adhering to the different preconditions that we have just cited. If we establish all the necessary circumstances, we will be able to arrive at practical solutions for transforming the negative experiences of victims of rape and sexual violence into positive developments so as to restore human dignity and eliminate once and for all violence against women and the structural obstacles to their economic, social and political empowerment and gender equality.

ECCAS will continue its reach out to member States to encourage them to accelerate the implementation of their national plans on resolution 1325 (2000), as well as the legal decisions and instruments adopted to enable women to participate in all spheres of life. To that end, ECCAS welcomes the collaboration with its strategic partners, particularly the United Nations, the African Union and the other regional economic communities, as well as civil society and the private sector, in exchanging experiences and good practices.

Finally, we welcome the support of those partners in pooling human and material resources at the regional, national and continental levels with a view to charting the way forward and identifying the collective actions to be taken to win the fight against sexual violence.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea to make a further statement.

Mr. Lee Jooil (Republic of Korea): I would like to reply to the statement made by the Japanese representative regarding the issue of comfort women.

The issue of comfort women has dimensions that go beyond the bilateral relationship between the Republic of Korea and Japan. It is indeed a matter of universal human rights and, in particular, is related to sexual violence in conflict, the resolution of which requires a victim-centred approach. The Korean Government will continue to cooperate with the international community on this issue.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Japan to make a further statement.

Mr. Furumoto (Japan): The Government of Japan has long been sincerely dealing with the issue of comfort women. In addition, as a result of considerable diplomatic efforts, Japan and the Republic of Korea reached an agreement in December 2015. With that agreement, both countries confirmed that the issue of comfort women had been finally and irreversibly resolved. It is of great importance that the agreement be strictly implemented.

The meeting rose at 8.15 p.m.