



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

8949th

meeting

Tuesday, 18 January 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Ms. Juul (Norway)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Spasse
Brazil	Mrs. Espeschit Maia
China	Ms. Qi Lihong
France	Ms. Freudenreich
Gabon	Ms. Bouanga Ayouné
Ghana	Mr. Famiah
India	Mr. Setia
Ireland	Mr. McSwiney
Kenya	Ms. Nthoki
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmenkov
United Arab Emirates	Ms. Tantawy
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Andrews
United States of America	Ms. Kroeker-Maus

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Protecting participation: addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes

Letter dated 10 January 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/22)

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of Security Council members dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this official record of the Security Council will be supplemented by a compilation of annexes (S/2022/38) containing the statements submitted by interested non-members of the Council.

22-23336 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President: I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to do its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the microphone collars will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mrs. Inanç Örnekol (Turkey): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this important debate. I also thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the other briefers for sharing their insights. And I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude and appreciation to women peacekeepers around the world for their service.

More than two decades ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000). In doing so, the Council made it known to the world that there could not be lasting peace without gender equality. Yet despite subsequent resolutions and our best efforts, the implementation of that agenda has fallen short. The stalled progress coincided with and was exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. A shadow pandemic of intensified violence against women and girls emerged. Humanitarian workers in conflict zones across the world now report new cases of violence against women and girls daily. The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2021/827) outlines the violence, intimidation and reprisals that women endure in response to their engagement in peace processes around the world. We need to take immediate action to reverse that deeply worrying trend.

To date, the Council has called for the implementation of peace agreements in numerous resolutions, as well as for ensuring the enhanced participation of women at all stages of peace processes. However, the onus is on all Member States to ensure women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels, everywhere. We must support women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and representatives of civil society so that they can fully and meaningfully engage and take part in all aspects of public and political life. Only then can we achieve truly inclusive societies that will enable us to make progress in maintaining peace and security, upholding human rights and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Turkey has actively contributed to the development of recently adopted NATO policies on issues related to women and peace and security. We also continue to implement gender-responsive training for security personnel deployed domestically, as well as to NATO's Mission Iraq and Kosovo Force and to other peacekeeping missions and operations.

In Afghanistan, Turkey is currently operating 45 schools across the country, 14 of them girls' schools. We have also been emphasizing to the caretaker Government the importance of political inclusivity and the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The fundamental rights of Afghan women and girls must be respected, and that includes the right of every woman and girl in Afghanistan to access both employment and education. Those are non-negotiable.

Turkey continues to make every effort to support women and girls who have fled Syria. We have provided psychological and social support to more than 400,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey since 2014. All the necessary legal steps are being taken to protect women refugees who have experienced violence. Women refugees who identify as victims of violence have the right to stay in women's shelters and receive much-needed assistance. Syrian women under temporary protection also benefit from the same health-care services as Turkish citizens. We sincerely hope that our efforts will enable Syrian women to participate in rebuilding a post-conflict Syria in the future.

I applaud brave women peacebuilders around the world. They press on in the face of danger in the hope of creating a more peaceful society for all. We thank those fearless women and promise to continue our work to implement the women and peace and security agenda with determination.

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

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): I would like to thank the delegation of Norway and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as Ms. Yaftali and Ms. Asoka, for their important contributions this morning. I also congratulate Norway and Albania, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates, all current Council members, for making women and peace and security a priority of their respective presidencies.

We are constantly reminded of the relevance of resolution 1325 (2000) and its follow-up resolutions by the daily risks that women encounter at every stage of the conflict cycle. One striking example is Afghanistan, as the representative of Turkey also mentioned. Since the takeover by the Taliban, Afghan women have encountered violence, infringements of their rights and extreme marginalization. That summons us to create safe environments for women involved in peacebuilding in order to protect and empower those who defend human rights in Afghanistan and beyond. Germany is fully committed to the women and peace and security agenda, including by ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security processes at every level, leveraging their leadership. That continues to be an important commitment that we pursue in all aspects of our foreign policy. Today I would like to mention three concrete examples of our current endeavours.

First, two years ago, Germany founded the Elisabeth-Selbert-Initiative, a protection programme for human rights defenders, including women, at risk all over the world. The Initiative helps those under threat receive temporary relocation grants and on-site assistance.

Secondly, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund is a unique financial instrument for strengthening women's organizations and female leadership through concrete projects. In 2021, Germany supported the fund with €18 million. Today, together with Norway, we had the honour to launch the new Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund funding window for women human rights defenders working for inclusive peace and humanitarian action. In that framework, Germany will provide €2 million to support Afghan women human rights defenders inside and outside the country. We encourage other Member States to pledge their support to the new funding window and to the Fund more broadly.

Thirdly, we believe that strong voices in the Security Council are crucial to the protection of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders. That is why, during our tenure on the Council, we brought many women briefers from civil society to this Chamber and put forward resolution 2467 (2019). The vital importance of that resolution is evident as women human rights defenders continue to face targeted violence and are at a higher risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

When women human rights defenders are threatened and hindered in their engagements, we will see shrinking spaces as well as less sustainable peace. The United Nations and its Member States must do more to protect women in peace processes and ensure safe environments for them. We must put in place protective measures for women peacebuilders at risk, uphold our support for their crucial activities, elevate their strong voices and be united in our action. I assure the Council that Germany will continue to stand ready to do so.

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

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statements delivered this morning by the representatives of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, and Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

I would like to thank Norway for focusing the attention of the Security Council on an issue as pressing and long-standing as the participation and protection of women in peace processes. I also thank the briefers for their very insightful presentations.

After each annual report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security, we seem to follow the same routine. We condemn all forms of violence against women and girls and express our deep condolences to the families of victims. But while we mourn the losses and calculate the damages, we should not forget the very reason that we are involved in these discussions in the first place, which is to ensure that we take action. Here we should define what the working modes of participation for women peacebuilders are and how we can ensure their security both offline and online. Those are the immediate steps we should take in order to achieve the ultimate goal, which is the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all stages and levels of peace processes. The fact is that the global statistics for 2021 remain worrisome. In addition, the effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic regrettably continue to create significant shortcomings in the systematic integration of gender perspectives across the political, economic, social and technological arenas. Structural inequalities not only persist but are often institutionalized and interpreted as part of organizational or occupational culture. Those findings reverberate throughout the women and peace and security community and call for immediate collective action.

As a dedicated international actor, Bulgaria monitors developments in the field and seeks original and innovative solutions for achieving an environment enabling inclusive and participatory security. A prime example in that regard would be the Crisis Management and Disaster Response Centre of Excellence in Sofia. The Centre provides crucial research and analysis, as well as tailored education and training for senior experts. It has a long-standing and constantly growing commitment to supporting gender mainstreaming in the security and defence sector, particularly in the areas of crisis management and disaster response. To that end, the Centre cooperates with the European Security and Defence College.

Considering that the funds allocated for advancing the women and peace and security agenda on a global scale are still insufficient, Bulgaria is currently exploring ways to increase funding for official development assistance projects with a gender focus.

Lastly, I would like to underline that the inclusion of civil society is crucial to putting effective protection and prevention measures in place. Only through direct contact with people on the ground can we understand the immediate risks they face on a daily basis and identify ways to strengthen their protection effectively so as to put an end to threats and violence against human rights defenders and peacebuilders. We also reiterate our belief that all relevant United Nations bodies should work together on such matters and provide regular feedback.

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

Mr. Duarte Lopes (Portugal): Portugal thanks the Norwegian presidency of the Security Council for holding this important open debate.

We align ourselves with the statements made this morning by the representatives of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, and Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

More than 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we are still witnessing critical situations where women's voices continue to go unheard. The current situation in Afghanistan is just one example, along with those in the Sahel and Myanmar, as highlighted this morning by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We strongly condemn the harassment, threats and attacks that women face worldwide, both online and offline, often

targeting women human rights defenders, gender equality advocates and civil-society organizations. Particularly troubling are the reprisals faced by women who engage with the United Nations and the Security Council in the context of peace and security processes. Since 2009 Portugal has had a national action plan to implement the women and peace and security agenda that is currently in its third edition, and we are fully committed to its implementation.

First, we believe that Member States must plan for action and monitor results, both at the national and regional levels. Secondly, the role of the United Nations in coordinating Member States' efforts in implementing that agenda is instrumental. Thirdly, the women and peace and security agenda should be properly funded.

We need the Security Council, in close collaboration with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council and UN-Women, to provide the necessary attention and resources to create safe environments where women can engage without the fear of retaliation. Priority should be given to partnerships with host countries and especially to local, community-based women's networks, while ensuring that the protection of women peacebuilders is explicitly included in the mandates of United Nations missions. We can and must strive for a more comprehensive implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and for an end to violence against women in all its forms.

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

Mr. Lagatie (Belgium): I am delivering this statement on behalf of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, the Benelux countries.

I would like to align myself with the statements made by the representatives of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, and Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

At the outset, I would like to thank the briefers for their testimonies today. It is alarming to see such unprecedented and appalling levels of violence, harassment and reprisals against women human rights defenders. The Security Council has a responsibility to ensure a safe and secure environment for civil-society actors, journalists and trade-union members in carrying out their essential peacebuilding efforts. However, at the moment the burden is almost entirely

on the individuals themselves. According to the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, the Council has failed to address the root causes of the issue or to mount an effective response when attacks on civil society occur. The protection of women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders remains one of the starkest gaps in its implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

We are very grateful to Norway for the opportunity to deepen our reflections on measures that the Security Council can take, building on the discussions that we started during the Arria Formula meeting on the topic in February 2020 during Belgium's presidency of the Security Council, at which the Benelux countries all voiced their concerns. Our countries actively support the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN-Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in preventing and addressing reprisals, and we call on all Member States to do the same.

Civil society has also made recommendations to Member States and the diplomatic community on lowering risks, such as the guidelines on the protection of women human rights defenders developed by Peace Brigades International, Cordaid and the Dutch Gender Platform WO=MEN, as well as by the International Service for Human Rights. We see six key recommendations for Member States going forward.

First, at the international level, we must continue to advocate for a more enabling environment for civil society to do its work free from fear, threats, harassment, violence or reprisals of any kind.

Secondly, we must apply a gender perspective in peace and security processes, consider the specific risks faced by different groups of women human rights defenders and integrate appropriate risk mitigation where possible.

Thirdly, we must be mindful that merely receiving diplomatic support or being in contact with diplomats can put women human rights defenders at risk. Any action taken to protect or empower women human rights defenders must be at the expressed wish of those concerned and in close consultation with them in order to minimize the possibility of reprisals.

Fourthly, with their consent, we must increase the visibility of the work of specific civil-society members

through media or by bringing up individual cases directly with the authorities concerned.

Fifthly, we must open avenues for reporting individual cases, collecting data and strengthening monitoring mechanisms at both the national and international levels.

Sixthly, we must support national authorities through capacity-building in recognizing and addressing threats to civil society and ensuring accountability.

Finally, in past years we have unfortunately seen several cases of reprisals against briefers who have addressed the Council. Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg are firmly committed to a zero-tolerance approach to such acts of violence. The engagement of women human rights defenders with the Security Council's work is crucial to deepening our understanding of local dynamics that can make or break processes for peace and post-conflict reconstruction. We have a collective responsibility to protect the people who have the courage to come to this Chamber and share their stories with the world in order to end situations of injustice. That includes taking precautions to mitigate physical and digital security risks by identifying safe communication systems for contacting the briefers concerned, among other things. In case of reprisals, we need to ensure accountability and protection. Member States should collectively stand ready to raise such situations with the countries concerned and give briefers emergency assistance. Our countries are ready to continue their engagement on this critical issue.

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

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the Norwegian presidency for organizing this open debate, and I am grateful to the briefers for their insights.

Women play an important role in the socioeconomic development and political life of all societies. During conflicts they are subject to violence and discriminatory actions, and in post-conflict situations they have an undeniable potential for contributing to peace and security processes. In conflict situations, efforts must therefore be focused on addressing the root causes of violence against women, particularly conflict-related sexual violence. In post-conflict situations, the main approach must be one of protecting their rights and ensuring their participation in conflict resolution

and peace processes, as well as humanitarian and reconstruction activities.

We share the view that women's political, social and economic empowerment is critical, as it can increase their resistance to violence in conflict situations and promote their role in further contributing to peace and reconciliation processes and to reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in post-conflict situations. The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the role of women in socioeconomic development as well as in the political and cultural life of our society. Despite the United States' imposition of sanctions on us — which, in addition to violating rules of international law, breaches the basic rights of women and girls, especially their right to development — we have made significant achievements in empowering women and girls in Iran.

Just as an example, I would like to mention education, which is vital to women's empowerment. We have made significant progress in that regard, and as a result, women and girls currently make up more than half of all university students, while the numbers of girls studying medicine and science in Iran are double those of men. As such, women are active participants in day-to-day affairs in Iran and are very active in elections as both candidates and voters. Furthermore, our Parliament has adopted a charter for women's rights and responsibilities, which ensures the protection and promotion of women's rights in various areas.

In the Middle East, we unfortunately continue to witness the devastating effects of foreign occupations and interventions, as well as terrorist activities targeting women and girls. The longest-standing case is that of Palestinian women and girls, who continue to suffer from the adverse effects of a decades-long occupation and human rights violations. In Afghanistan, we believe that the protection of the human rights of all Afghans, including women and girls, and their participation in the peace and security process, as well as their legitimate aspirations, must be ensured.

Finally, we reiterate our principled position that issues related to women and girls fall under the mandate of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies such as UN-Women. The subject should therefore be dealt with by the Security Council only insofar as it is directly linked to the maintenance of international peace and security.

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

Mr. Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate Norway on its leadership in organizing this open debate, which is also the first of the year. I also acknowledge Norway's efforts to keep the doors of the Security Council open to the participation of all States.

On 21 October of last year we discussed this subject under the Kenyan presidency in another open debate on women and peace and security (see S/PV.8886). In that connection, I want to underline the key role played by the Council's non-permanent members in the efforts to achieve increasingly inclusive working methods, on the one hand, and to ensure that the debates on women and peace and security are properly and permanently structured and not limited to commemorating the anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on the other.

In October the Council focused on the need to promote women's participation in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Like the majority of participating countries, Ecuador took advantage of that occasion to recognize the significant contribution of women to processes related to peace and security and to conflict prevention and resolution, as well as the need to build on that contribution by removing obstacles to women's participation.

As I have already stated in the Council, during the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review process Ecuador contributed to evaluating the situation of women in contexts of conflict. Regrettably, the pandemic saw an increase in domestic violence, conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking, harassment and exploitation. In order to promote women's effective participation in the maintenance of peace and security, it is therefore essential to create and maintain stable environments, and in particular to ensure zero tolerance for impunity for perpetrators. To that end, we must continue strengthening the capacity of peacekeeping missions to protect the women working in them. The Security Council should also lend its strong support to efforts to prevent intimidation, violence and attacks.

The Council is not starting from scratch. With resolution 2493 (2019), which encourages the creation of safe environments for civil society, including in situations of armed conflict, and the neutralization of harassment, violence and hate speech, we have

tools to intensify efforts in this area. However, the responsibility is not the Council's alone but that of the entire United Nations system. That is why it is crucial that the Secretary-General's report entitled *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) centres security policies on women and girls, based on the abundant evidence testifying to the link between women's equal participation in peacemaking activities and the effectiveness of those activities.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the delegations of Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates on starting their two-year terms on the Security Council this month and to wish them and the rest of the Council members success in their work. Ecuador, which hopes to be elected to the Council in June for the period from 2023 to 2024, will continue to closely follow the work of this principal organ with special interest in its efforts to promote and protect the participation of women.

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

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank Norway for convening this public ministerial debate on women and peace and security, an issue of paramount importance, during its presidency of the Council. I also thank the briefers for their interventions this morning. My delegation would like to underscore the following five points.

First, the gender issue was addressed in all of its aspects in resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which notably advanced the participation of women in peace and security initiatives. Each subsequent Security Council resolution on this topic has recognized and reaffirmed the rights of women and gender equality and underscored the importance of the four Ps — the prevention of conflict, the protection of women and girls, the participation of women and the promotion of gender perspectives. Moreover, the gender perspective has been integrated both upstream and downstream into actions being taken to ensure sustainable peace, a more inclusive democracy and a true rule of law that protects women against all forms of violence and discrimination.

Secondly, the participation of women in negotiation processes increases the chances of conflict resolution and sustainable peace. It was in that framework that Morocco took the initiative to organize an international

conference on women, peace and security that examined the crucial role of women in peace processes, among other things. It was also an occasion to identify best practices for strengthening women's participation in negotiations, conflict resolution and peacebuilding and to renew the international community's commitment to women's inclusion and gender equality in all peacemaking and conflict-prevention strategies and to the protection of women against all forms of violence and intimidation.

Thirdly, under the patronage of His Excellency King Mohammed VI, from 10 to 12 October 2018 Morocco hosted the third international conference of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, on the theme of expanding civic space and promoting and protecting human rights defenders, with a specific focus on women and the role of national human rights institutions. The conference led to the adoption of the Marrakech Declaration, which among other things recalls the General Assembly's 2013 adoption of resolution 68/181, on women human rights defenders, and underscores the important role played by women human rights defenders in the protection and promotion of all human rights. It is important to note that Morocco was a pioneer in introducing the issue of human rights defenders within the United Nations, leading to the Assembly's adoption in December 1988 of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Morocco remains indefatigably committed to the promotion and protection of internationally recognized human rights and to strengthening its partnership with civil society.

Fourthly, Morocco believes that United Nations peace operations play a unique and crucial role in conflict resolution, by supporting States as they emerge from crises and providing them with multifaceted security, political and peacebuilding support, which enables the creation of safe, secure and inclusive environments conducive to women's full and meaningful participation in all areas of peacebuilding. Where mandated by the Security Council, its peacekeeping operations work to ensure the full participation of women at all levels and at every stage of conflict prevention, peace processes and the protection of civilians.

Lastly, Morocco's armed forces incorporate a gender approach in accordance with the internationally recognized principles that Morocco adheres to and that

are enshrined in our 2011 Constitution. It also reaffirms Morocco's adherence to the Secretary-General's system-wide Strategy on Gender Parity for the decade from 2018 to 2028 and affirms the crucial role that women play in peace operations. Within the framework of our armed forces' participation, Moroccan Blue Helmets are deployed in various United Nations peacekeeping missions, including the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, in order to protect the universal values of peace on which our Organization is founded.

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

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): I thank you for this opportunity, Madam President, as well as for your efforts to mainstream the women and peace and security agenda in the work of the Council. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation at all stages of conflict prevention and resolution is a key pillar of the women and peace and security agenda. Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent decisions bring gender-responsive approaches to sustaining peace to the forefront and highlight women's crucial role as agents of change. In many parts of the world, women have advanced political change and contributed to sustainable peace as peacekeepers, mediators, lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders, among other vocations. At the same time, women in those key roles often face violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, intimidation, threats, harassment and reprisals for their work in bringing peace and preventing and ending conflict.

We are concerned about the increase in verified killings in 2020 of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in conflict-affected countries, as documented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We owe it to those women to ensure that their human rights are respected at all times and that the environments they operate in are safe and enabling at all stages of the conflict cycle. That includes overcoming gender stereotypes and inequalities and moving away from patriarchal masculinities, which are at the root of gender-based violence and discrimination. It also means providing adequate medical, psychosocial and legal

assistance for all victims and survivors and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable.

We remain deeply concerned about the risk of the targeted violence that women and girls are exposed to in many conflicts, including in Yemen, Myanmar and Ethiopia. We note in particular the precarious situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, who have fought with great courage and resolve for their rights and freedoms. The ongoing financial and humanitarian crises have disproportionately affected women, children, minority communities and female-headed households. Violence against Afghan women is sadly — and yet again — on the rise. We call for protecting and ensuring respect for all human rights, including the right of women and girls to free expression, movement, quality education and employment. Those who exercise effective control in a country must comply with their obligations under international human rights law and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Paragraph 4 of resolution 2593 (2021) encourages

“all parties to seek an inclusive, negotiated political settlement, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, that responds to the desire of Afghans to sustain and build on Afghanistan's gains over the last 20 years in adherence to the rule of law”.

The backsliding in women's political participation over the past few months is disastrous for Afghanistan's future and its prospects for peace and should be halted immediately.

We also want to highlight the situation in Belarus, on which the Council has so far been silent. Many women have stood up with courage and conviction to advance political dialogue that is critical for democracy and respect for human rights. The Women in White movement is just one example of women's crucial role as agents of change around the globe. We condemn and call for the investigation of the excessive use of force and unlawful retaliation by the authorities against peaceful protesters, including mass detentions, intimidation, torture and sexual and gender-based violence against those who are seeking political change and respect for democratic principles. The perpetrators must be held accountable. It is the obligation of the United Nations, and the Council in particular, to work to end impunity for such crimes and to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in

peacemaking, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as their protection.

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

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): First of all, let me congratulate you, Madam, on your country's presidency and wish you every success in your role. We welcome this open debate and thank you for organizing it. We find the topic very relevant and timely, as the number of cases of targeted violence in the context of women and peace and security is unprecedentedly high. We consider such practices unacceptable, and we should take every measure at our disposal to reverse them immediately.

Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union.

We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his 2021 report on women and peace and security (S/2021/827), and to commend him for his leadership and strong commitment to fostering the role of women in all areas and the relevant decision-making processes. As the report says, there are nearly 100 studies that indicate some type of link between sex and gender inequality and violent outcomes, which is particularly worrisome and deserves our continuing attention. The call for greater participation by women in peace and security processes has never been more urgent. Women contribute to ending conflicts, restoring shattered communities and sustaining peace. It is therefore essential to equip them with the necessary skills, including by providing them with relevant training, connecting decision-makers with women leaders and ensuring women's full participation in all the relevant decision-making processes.

In that connection, eliminating barriers for women should be at the top of our agenda, and there are a number of tangible measures that can be taken to strengthen the role of women, such as the adoption of national action plans. As reflected in our own 2021-2025 national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), Slovakia strongly supports women's equal and full participation in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security, while adopting and supporting tangible and targeted measures aimed at increasing the percentage of women in our armed forces and their representation in military structures and leadership positions. We are proud to lead the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, and together with our co-Chair, South Africa, we

are committed to working closely with the Group of Friends of Gender Parity in specifically addressing the issue of women's role and participation in armed forces, including peacekeeping.

With the aim of identifying avenues that can lead to the creation of a safe and enabling environment and to preventing and responding to threats, I would like to briefly highlight four practical points.

The first is active strategic communications. Emphasizing the role of women in peace and security processes, supplying social media support and preventing advocates for women and peace and security from becoming isolated in their societies and communities are issues of paramount importance.

Secondly, with regard to deployment, a focus on understanding the human terrain and operational challenges must be taken into account, supplemented by monitoring the social media response and conducting proactive information campaigns.

Thirdly, Member States could support the prevention of violence and attacks by providing protection, which is the main responsibility of host countries, and using positive examples.

Fourthly, because an understanding of the environment and the impact of media differs from operation to operation, a positive approach to the promotion of women and peace and security representatives is required, as is ensuring that gender-related issues are not presented in isolation from mandated tasks.

Last but not least, I want to emphasize that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights plays an important role in this regard. We therefore fully support increased and enhanced cooperation between the Office and the Security Council.

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

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): Madam President, allow me to join my colleagues in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency and expressing our appreciation for the convening of this debate. My gratitude also goes to the distinguished briefers.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made earlier today on behalf of the European Union,

and I would like to add the following comments in my national capacity.

Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without women's full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making. We welcome women's increasing participation in areas pertaining to international peace and security. However, despite the achievements made so far, progress in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda remains rather slow, and more work is needed to achieve our objectives. More worryingly, existing social and economic inequalities, especially for women in fragile situations, have been worsened by the ongoing pandemic. The number of killings of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists increased in 2020 compared to previous years, as stated in the Secretary-General's recent report (S/2021/827), and cases of intimidation, threats and harassment remain a matter of deep concern.

Ensuring the meaningful engagement of women in the peace process is a high priority for Georgia. My Government has been implementing the women and peace and security agenda since 2011, when we adopted our first national action plan. Our fourth national action plan, for the period from 2022 to 2024, is currently being deliberated on by the Government's inter-agency team, with the involvement of the relevant local civil-society groups and international organizations. The action plan constitutes a whole-of-Government approach to integrating gender perspectives into the security sector and into decision-making processes, using a gender lens in peace negotiations, protecting the rights of women and girls and promoting their meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution. In addition, the national action plan aims to protect the rights of conflict-affected women through ensuring their physical, social and economic security as well as supporting their participation in decision-making.

In that regard, Georgia is working to keep the issues of women affected by conflict, including internally displaced persons, on the agenda of the Geneva international discussions, the only format of negotiations between Georgia and Russia on security and humanitarian issues. With the support of UN-Women Georgia, the participants in the Geneva discussions hold regular meetings with representatives of civil society, including internally displaced women, conflict-affected women and women's rights advocacy groups, in order to exchange information about the

peace negotiations and ensure that the needs and priorities of conflict-affected women are integrated into the planning of the peace process. To meet our commitments under the relevant Security Council resolutions, we continue to support and promote conflict-affected women in Georgia as a driving force for public diplomacy. As a result, more than 65 per cent of those involved in the peace process in Georgia today are women. However, those efforts are undermined by the ongoing occupation of Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, where fundamental human rights violations occur on a daily basis. Instead of supporting and advancing the involvement of women, including women human rights defenders, the occupying regime brutally intimidates and silences them. The case of the civil-society activist Ms. Tamar Mearakishvili is a vivid example.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Georgia's commitment to integrating a gender perspective in decision-making, protecting the rights of women and promoting their meaningful participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

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

Mr. Fifield (Australia): I would like to thank Norway for convening today's timely open debate and for its continued leadership on the women and peace and security agenda.

It is critical that women participate fully, equally and meaningfully in all peace and security processes without the threat of reprisals, intimidation or violence. Women have the right to lead and participate in restoring, building and maintaining peace and security and in governing their communities and countries. The evidence shows that women's meaningful participation strengthens protection efforts, advances the human rights of women and girls, accelerates economic recovery, supports peacebuilding efforts and leads to sustainable peace. The role of civil society, women's human rights defenders, peacebuilders and mediators is invaluable. National action plans on women and peace and security are essential to empowering women and girls and eliminating violence against them. Through its second national action plan, Australia continues to work to ensure that women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security processes and the

elimination of sexual and gender-based violence are at the centre of our efforts.

Australia is gravely concerned about the ongoing escalation of reprisals, intimidation and violence against women peacebuilders, civil-society representatives and human rights defenders. The reports of targeted killings of women's rights defenders in Afghanistan and on the situation of women and girls in Myanmar are tragic reminders of the urgent need for collective action. The diverse voices and legitimacy of women must be defended and promoted at every level, and we must continue to stand by those who need our support. Australia will continue to do just that by standing with its partners in order to strengthen women's participation and protect those at risk of or subjected to violence. We commend the work of organizations dedicated to protecting people under threat and ensuring that women's voices continue to be heard, prioritized and valued. Australia especially acknowledges the work of women's rights organizations and human rights defenders. We support increasing financing, which is key to effective participation, and recognize the importance of diverse partnerships, locally led initiatives and resources in preventing conflict and violence and promoting participation in peace and security processes, including through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

Mechanisms that enable women and girls to participate meaningfully can also support the identification and prevention of human rights violations and abuses. The collection and use of data and research in evidence-based decision-making and leadership is important. We must embed gender equality and women's empowerment in all United Nations peace operations. The Council has a critical role to play in leading action to address the root causes of the intimidation, violence and attacks that violate the human rights of women and girls. We thank the women peacebuilders, civil-society representatives and human rights defenders for their work and for continuing to speak out.

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

Mr. Mainero (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank Norway sincerely for convening today's open debate on a topic as relevant as that of addressing the violence, intimidation and reprisals that target women involved in peace processes. Through its resolution 1325 (2000),

the Security Council recognized for the first time the central role that women should play in conflict prevention and resolution. Since then, the world has become more aware both of women's difficult situation as well as of their positive contributions in conflict situations. The world is also increasingly aware of why it is so essential to ensure women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention and in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes. However, large gaps remain. It has been more than 20 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), and little progress has been made in fully implementing it. Women continue to be excluded from peace processes, which necessarily results in agreements that not only fail to provide for women's rights and needs but also undermine the sustainability of those peace processes.

Let us not forget that there is also a growing number of armed groups for whom gender inequality is a strategic goal and for whom misogyny forms part of their central ideology. Bearing in mind the impact that conflicts have on women's lives, it is vital that those who have the power to decide who gets to sit at the negotiating table can guarantee women a seat and that they can participate equitably and substantively. However, women's participation cannot be substantive or meaningful if their physical safety is not also assured. It is a deeply regrettable fact that women negotiators, activists, politicians and human rights defenders continue to be attacked for their involvement in peace processes, including through sexual violence. The Secretary-General's 2021 report on women and peace and security (S/2021/827) points to 35 verified killings of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in seven countries affected by conflict in 2020. The threats and harassment visited on many women in order to silence their voices and deter them from participating in peace processes force many of them to abandon their countries of origin.

The role that women play in peace processes must be protected by States so that they can do their critical work without fear of intimidation or reprisals. The right of women to fully participate in every aspect of public life depends on their ability to do so in a safe environment. Threats against and attacks on women peacebuilders are unacceptable. They deter women from participation and leadership. That is particularly true of women from marginalized communities, because they already have to overcome many other barriers to enter public life. States must take steps both for prevention

and to ensure accountability. They should take every possible measure to avert threats and attacks against women who participate in peace processes, while also ensuring that if such acts do take place, the perpetrators are held accountable.

Peacekeeping operations are another key pillar of the women and peace and security agenda. On the one hand, increasing the participation of women in civil and military contingents is a critical factor in ensuring the overall success of peace missions. It is also vital to ensure that peacekeeping operations and special political missions improve their monitoring and reporting of threats and violence against women negotiators, activists and human rights defenders, and that such monitoring and reporting are included in early warning system signals of conflict escalation.

The barriers to women's participation are structural and rooted in the various forms of discrimination and violence that women have to deal with. They are exacerbated by conflicts and crises. Threats and violence against women peacebuilders are expressions of misogyny, with the goal of preventing women from doing their work. Normalizing the participation of women in peace processes and shining a light on the important role they play in this field, together with increasing the cost of attacks on them through accountability measures, are vital to broadening the space for women's participation.

The women and peace and security agenda must be a priority not only for the Security Council but for the United Nations as a whole. Women are agents of change and pillars of their communities. Argentina remains committed to that vision and views the women and peace and security agenda as a key component of efforts to ensure international peace and security.

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

Mr. Skoknic Tapia (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Chile would like to commend Norway for convening today's open debate on the topic of protecting women who participate in peace and security processes and addressing the violence targeting them, at a time when the coronavirus disease pandemic has made abundantly clear the extent to which women around the world are vulnerable to gender-based violence. Chile would also like to thank the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, as well as the other briefers, for their briefings this morning.

Recent figures indicate that in 2020 the number of verified cases of the murder of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists surpassed that of previous years. Chile is deeply alarmed by that deplorable state of affairs. Furthermore, with regard to addressing the shadow pandemic of violence against women, none of the ceasefire agreements that were reached between 2018 and 2020 included gender provisions. That means that, although we are aware of the threats that women face, much remains to be done to fulfil our commitments to protecting them from violence, retaliation and intimidation.

In addition, we have not seen any significant improvement with regard to representation, given that in 2020 women constituted only 23 per cent of delegates in peace processes led, or jointly led, by the United Nations. To respond to that issue, peace processes must establish guarantees for victims, include new social compacts that address development inequality in a structural and multidimensional manner, and protect and strengthen women's leadership in peacebuilding. In addition, there should be a focus not only on restoring the rights of women victims but also on the transformational rebuilding of women's dignity and their role as active social actors in their communities and social environments.

With the aim of prioritizing the role of women in peace processes, Chile established a working group on resolution 1325 (2000) that includes its Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Interior and Public Security, Ministry of Women and Gender Equity and Ministry of National Defence.

We also currently have two national plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and are also working on developing a third national plan that has a broad focus on ensuring women's participation in peacebuilding processes, in synergy with the inspiring work and principles of the Regional Network of Women Mediators of the Southern Cone, of which Chile has been a member since its launch in 2021.

In conclusion, Chile is convinced of the positive impact of women's participation, ranging from humanitarian and peacebuilding work in the field to peace process negotiations and high-level decision-making. We remain committed to creating a safe and enabling environment in which all women, in particular women peacebuilders, human rights

defenders and civil society representatives, may carry out their important work.

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

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania): Lithuania aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. I would now like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Let me begin by expressing our great appreciation to the Norwegian presidency and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Ms. Anniken Huitfeldt, for convening this open debate on addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes and ensuring that the topic remains high on the agenda of the Security Council.

I would also like to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, as well as the other briefers, for their important insights.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has dramatically changed and affected all areas of our lives, including health, the economy, security and social protection. We have also witnessed a significant setback for gender equality that will require us to multiply our efforts and set our priorities straight with regard to building back better. We must acknowledge that gender equality is an essential factor for security and stability in countries. It is not only an important element in economic development but also a critical predictor of stability and security.

Numerous studies, as well as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/827) on women and peace and security, indicate that higher levels of gender equality are associated with a lower propensity for conflict both among and within States. Nevertheless, the numbers in terms of women's representation in peace negotiations, mediation and other peacebuilding efforts remain very low.

Women are frequently denied access to decision-making, and even when they are involved they are impacted by gender-based violence, including assault, threats, abuse and harassment, both online and offline. Women human rights defenders and journalists, who are pivotal in promoting sustainable peace, are killed, threatened and harassed. We do not even have the complete picture of women experiencing all forms

of violence, as they are often hesitant and too scared to report it. We must be more determined to ensure the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Our consistent efforts are required at every stage to prevent reversals and non-compliance.

Lithuania is in the process of implementing the second instalment of its women and peace and security national action plan covering the period 2020 to 2024, which was drafted and implemented in close cooperation with Lithuanian civil society, including women's organizations. This year we envisage a series of events on women's inclusion in international peacebuilding and on the women and peace and security dimensions of the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy operations. The appointment of gender advisers at our national defence and police headquarters, an important element of our national action plan, is under consideration.

Lithuania remains committed to implementing the women and peace and security agenda, both nationally and internationally. It has continuously provided financial support to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund since its launch in 2016.

We are also actively helping women from Belarus who, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, were attacked, tortured or detained for their participation in protests. Brave Belarusian women, including former presidential candidate Mrs. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, have found a temporary home in Lithuania. We regard hosting exiled female opposition figures and their political teams in Lithuania as a contribution to the international women and peace and security agenda.

We urge all Member States to create a safe and enabling environment for all those who protect and promote gender equality; fulfil the obligations to protect women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and advocates for gender equality; and hold perpetrators accountable.

We strongly encourage all Member States, including members of the Council and the United Nations, to take measures to provide sustained support to women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and advocates for gender equality.

The past couple of years have showed us that no progress made in ensuring gender equality can be taken for granted. The choices of today will affect our

recovery, peace and stability for years to come, as well as the international community's ability to prevent and respond to future crises. We should therefore choose wisely, taking into account that only inclusive peace can be sustainable.

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

Mr. Nasir (Indonesia): I take this opportunity to thank Norway for convening this important open debate, and I thank all briefers for their presentations.

As we heard from the briefers, 22 years after the women and peace and security agenda was first introduced, violence targeting women and girls persists and has even worsened. I therefore reaffirm Indonesia's commitment to fully and effectively implementing the women and peace and security agenda. On that note, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, ensuring accountability in combating violence targeting women is crucial. The primary responsibility to prevent and address violence targeting women in conflict lies with national authorities. Governments must protect victims, with full respect for their human rights. Strengthening the reach and the capacity of national authority is therefore vital to facilitating access to justice and ensuring accountability. Victims of violence should also be provided with support beyond the courts, especially in regaining their confidence and role in society. We commend Governments that have put in place more protective legal and policy frameworks to protect women and children at risk.

Secondly, there is a need to enhance the role of women peacekeepers, who play a strategic role, particularly in protecting and engaging women in the affected communities. Indonesia is committed to increasing the participation of women peacekeepers as an important strategy for addressing violence targeting women in conflict. Central to that is the implementation of resolution 2538 (2020), on women peacekeepers, a milestone resolution that recognizes the indispensable role of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We are proud to have introduced to the Security Council that resolution, which received the full support of the Council and the wider United Nations membership.

We call upon the Council and the Secretariat to advance the implementation of resolution 2538 (2020) by promoting the full, effective and meaningful

participation in peacekeeping operations of both uniformed and civilian women, including in senior leadership positions, and to continue incorporating their participation in future relevant resolutions, including peacekeeping mandate renewals.

Thirdly, promoting women as mediators and negotiators is important. Women's active leadership is an integral part of sustaining peace in communities. However, the fact is that peace processes remain dominated by men. That is why Indonesia initiated the Southeast Asian Network of Women Peace Negotiators and Mediators in 2020 to advance the inclusion and effective participation of women as mediators and negotiators in peace processes, as a regional effort to complement the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators Networks. This past week, during the anniversary of the Southeast Asian Network, Mrs. Retno Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, reaffirmed the country's commitment to continue championing women's contributions to peace and security at the regional and global levels.

Indonesia will also continue its commitment to increasing the capacity of Afghan women. This year, we are committed to focusing on the issue of the education and empowerment of Afghan women, including through the provision of scholarships.

We stand with the victims and survivors of violence targeting women and support their human rights. Indonesia envisions the women and peace and security agenda as a transformative force to bring about more effective peacekeeping and peacebuilding. To protect women, we need to strengthen their role.

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

Mr. Almoslechner (Austria): Austria aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. We commend Norway for its efforts to address this important topic concerning the role of women human rights defenders engaging in conflict resolution and fostering peace in their communities. We thank the briefers for sharing their perspectives.

All our intergovernmental efforts to achieve peace and stability in conflict settings need to build on local ownership. Austria therefore fully supports the inclusion in the Security Council of civil society

representatives and country-specific discussions in order to inform its deliberations.

We are appalled by the reported acts of harassment and intimidation towards representatives of civil society organizations who have engaged with the Security Council and the United Nations. Testimony to, and dialogue with, Member States at the United Nations must never result in official or hidden reprisals. We call on Member States to respect, promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of their citizens, in particular the right to be free of fear and the right of freedom of expression and opinion.

Austria is a strong supporter of active civil-society participation in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and mediation and United Nations-led processes, including through regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution is working with women in several Western African countries to strengthen their capacity and engagement in humanitarian assistance; it is also developing female perspectives on water-related conflicts in Libya and has hosted civil-society-led mediation conferences, including from the South Caucasus region.

Among the many civil-society partners we support, Austria would like to highlight the work of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders for carrying the women and peace and security agenda from the Security Council to the ground level through localization programmes and national action plans.

As a contributor to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Austria also underlines the importance of supporting victims of reprisals who have faced torture and cruel treatment. We also commend the role of UN-Women for duly exercising its mandate to advocate for the active engagement and leadership of women in all spheres of society and to include girls and the succeeding generation in all its activities.

In September 2021, Austria pledged €20 million to ensure humanitarian support for the people of Afghanistan, €5 million of which is dedicated to supporting the activities of the UN-Women Afghanistan country office. Through the various activities of that office, Afghan women organizations and Afghan women human rights defenders will receive support and protection, such as access to safe houses. Through that Austrian funding, UN-Women will create channels and open political avenues to enable Afghan women to

engage on women's rights and help shape Afghanistan's future. UN-Women will actively seek ways to amplify the priorities of women and girls at all levels of decision-making in Afghanistan, including in country and intergovernmental platforms.

Austria will also continue to engage with the United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and its rapid response window on women's participation in local peace processes, including in Afghanistan, Liberia, Mali, Iraq and South Sudan. We commend the Fund on the successful launch on the margins of today's meeting of its new funding window for women human rights defenders. Let us commit together to protecting women human rights defenders and unite our forces for the full and effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

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

Mr. Prasad (Fiji): It is my honour to deliver this statement before the Security Council and the Norwegian presidency on the women and peace and security agenda. We are thankful to Norway, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the excellent civil society briefers for their remarks this morning. It is vital to the Council and a great tribute to its presidency that diverse voices are being heard on this peace and security agenda — one that is fundamental to its work and success.

Peace operations have been demonstrating improved integration of humanitarian development into peacebuilding interventions, which is helpful. However, far more remains to be done in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and other associated and relevant resolutions. The world is witnessing diverse threats to peace and security fuelled by the development of new high-technology and highly accessible weapons, the use of digital tools, climate change and dangerously growing inequality. However, across all of those drivers, conflicts always have a more disproportionate, intense and devastating impact on women and girls.

Fiji is committed to systematically advancing the women and peace security agenda, as reflected across our society and politics. Domestically, resolution 1325 (2000) has without a doubt enabled a significant increase in the number of women in security institutions across the country, which in turn is reflected in the growing proportions of women who participate in police and military engagements in peace operations

internationally. Women make up 56 per cent of Fijian police deployed to peacekeeping duties. We are proud of the deployment of an all-female section of the Fijian contingent of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force to manage one of the areas under the Force.

Fiji is determined to continue systematically increasing the number of women in its military and police deployments across peacekeeping operations. That is not coincidental. As a long-time peacekeeping nation, it is something that Fiji has learned from its own deployments. Fiji has participated in United Nations peace operations for more than 40 years. We have learned from our own deployments that women peacekeepers are better at defusing tensions at checkpoints. Women peacekeepers contribute unique insights to identifying sexual violence and preventing the appropriation of humanitarian assistance. They are better at identifying the weaponization of food and health care.

Throughout the Pacific region, each time the role of women in peacebuilding has been mainstreamed, significant outcomes have been achieved. The role of women in the peaceful political transitions in Papua New Guinea and Bougainville has provided important lessons. The role of women in defusing intercommunity conflicts in the Solomon Islands through a regional peace operation has been extremely instructive as well.

Across those conflicts, the strong partnerships between the host Governments, Pacific regional agencies and the United Nations were compelling enablers for increasing the participation of women. We find that when women are engaged, are seated at the negotiation table and participate across all processes, settlements are more likely to be inclusive, development outcomes are more likely to stick, and peace is more likely to last.

We have been asked to reflect on some ways forward. The Security Council has observed that women peacebuilders, mediators and civil society organizations receive less than 5 per cent of the total financing available for such work. That primary obstacle, which is true for both bilateral and multilateral assistance supporting such work, needs to be addressed. It would be good to know how far the United Nations itself has come in redressing that. It would be a very good start.

Resolution 1325 (2000) emphasizes that women should be involved fully and equally in the prevention of conflicts. The safety and protection of women

peacebuilders and human rights defenders is therefore fundamental. That calls for strengthened capacities within and across peace operations in a variety of areas, as well as for more detailed briefings to the Security Council and, in turn, to the General Assembly on violations of the rights of women peacebuilders and mediators.

Finally, Fiji reiterates that one of the gravest threats to peace and security is climate change. The impacts of climate change on conflicts are most intensely experienced by women and girls. The climate and security agenda and the women and peace and security agenda are one and the same. They are not separate agendas, and they are not silos. The faster the Council accepts that, the better off we will be in implementing the women and peace and security agenda.

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

Mr. Abd Aziz (Malaysia): Malaysia thanks Norway for convening this open debate on women and peace and security. We also thank the briefers for their insightful presentations.

We recognize the crucial role of women in efforts to build sustainable peace; therefore, the issue of violence targeting women in peace and security processes is indeed an important issue to address. Malaysia condemns all forms of violence against women. We are deeply concerned about the reports of violence, intimidation and reprisals faced by women peacebuilders, civil society representatives and human rights defenders. Such reports are disturbing, particularly at a time when the coronavirus disease pandemic has already significantly and negatively impacted women. In conflict areas, the socioeconomic impacts that women and children were already suffering have only grown worse during the pandemic.

Attacks on those who are dedicated to achieving peace inflict a great setback that undermines the objectives of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions. In that regard, we call for those who perpetrate such attacks against women in peace processes to be held accountable. Malaysia also believes there is a need to intensify efforts to promote and ensure women's full and equal participation in peace and security processes, as a prerequisite to achieving sustainable peace.

Malaysia therefore calls for Member States, in advancing the women and peace and security agenda, to take greater efforts and initiatives that are women-centred and include gendered analysis. Malaysia fully supports that agenda through its consistent financial contributions to UN-Women in its endeavour to promote women's meaningful participation and the integration of gender perspectives into peace and security processes.

Malaysia also co-sponsored resolution 2538 (2020), on women in peacekeeping, in line with our commitments to the women and peace and security agenda and the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. We believe that the presence of women peacekeepers in conflict zones can contribute positively to promoting inclusivity in efforts to pursue sustainable peace and development, and we are cognizant of the fact that conflicts affect women disproportionately more than men. It is appropriate that the number of women peacekeepers deployed to conflict and post-conflict areas is increasing to ensure that peacekeeping operations are more gender-responsive.

Malaysia itself is steadily increasing the number of women peacekeepers it deploys annually and hopes to reach by 2028 the targets outlined by the United Nations concerning the proportion of women peacekeepers. That is reflected in our latest deployment under the United Nations banner in Lebanon, where our contingent, which includes 85 female personnel, has the largest number of women peacekeepers.

At the regional level, Malaysia is committed to working closely with other member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to advance the women and peace and security agenda in the region, particularly by enhancing the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. ASEAN is currently finalizing its Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security.

Malaysia remains convinced that women's participation is key to the success and longevity of peace processes. Malaysia reaffirms its strong commitment to the efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda and will work with others to ensure the safe participation of women at all levels of peace processes and in mediation efforts.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new members of the Security Council on their election to the Council for the term 2022-2023.

I convey my best wishes to them all in discharging the duties entrusted to them by the Charter of the United Nations.

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

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this open debate on women and peace and security. I would also like to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the two civil society representatives for their briefings.

We stress the importance of working collectively at the international level, including with civil society, to implement and follow up resolution 1325 (2000). That resolution calls on the international community to adopt the measures needed to increase women's participation in decision-making, conflict prevention and settlement, as well as in building and maintaining peace, and to enhance legal protection for victims of armed conflicts, especially women and girls, including those working to achieve peace and security, in a way that highlights the role of women as drivers of peace and development in their societies.

In our efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000), Jordan is currently drafting its second national plan of action for the period 2022 to 2025, which includes the participation of all segments of civil society and stakeholders with a view to setting national priorities according to current and future needs while taking into account both climate change and comprehensive security. The plan of action will consider our international commitments and address the strategic objectives of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with regard to armed conflict, including increasing the participation of women in conflict resolution and decision-making.

The plan of action will also take into account the Kingdom's commitment to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, and Goal 16, on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

It is important to disseminate a culture that promotes gender equality and enhances the role of women and girls in building a culture of peace, while

recognizing the importance of education, training and rehabilitation in order to advance the skills of women and focusing at the same time on the role of men and young people in promoting the women and peace and security agenda.

Jordan has always been a driver of peace in the Middle East despite all the current challenges it faces in the region, including the large flow into Jordan of refugees as a result of regional conflicts, most of whom are women, girls and children. That has imposed significant stress on our local communities and led to social and behavioural changes, including marriages involving minors and domestic violence within the camps.

Jordan has dealt with the challenges resulting from the Syrian refugee crisis by establishing and implementing the necessary mechanisms and measures while launching awareness campaigns in local and refugee communities. In partnership with UN-Women, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, we also launched a rehabilitation programme to encourage the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees.

It is equally important to provide follow-up mechanisms for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), as well as to adopt indicators for performance evaluation and guarantee the necessary financial resources for the implementation of national plans, while also providing psychological support to the victims of violence and intensifying awareness-raising campaigns.

In conclusion, I emphasize that women should be at the forefront of leadership and a driver for negotiation and mediation efforts along with awareness-raising within their communities. Experience has shown that the true participation of women will have a positive impact on the success and sustainability of peace and security plans. Women play a pivotal role in so-called preventive diplomacy and soft diplomacy, thus enhancing the trust of communities in the capabilities of women in terms of assuming the highest leadership positions and achieving the highest rates of success.

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

Mr. Liepnieks (Latvia): Latvia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Head of the Delegation

of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Let me begin by expressing appreciation for Norway's long-standing leadership promoting the women and peace and security agenda. Also, I extend special thanks to Ms. Bachelet, Ms. Yaftali and Ms. Asoka for offering a comprehensive perspective on the challenges and opportunities regarding women's participation in peace processes.

Discussions such as this are crucial to raising awareness of the obstacles that women face daily in their efforts to contribute to international peace and security. As outlined in the latest report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2021/827), women peacebuilders and civil activists are continuously exposed to harassment and attacks. Latvia is deeply concerned about the surge in killings of women human rights defenders and journalists in 2020 — surpassing the numbers reported for 2019 and 2018. There is also an alarming level of underreporting and self-censorship, which results in the majority of cases being left uncovered. That is not acceptable.

We must pool our efforts to counter those threats and harassment against women, which are aimed at silencing them and precluding their participation. Silence equals powerlessness; when silencing women, we make them think that they have no rights, no value, no voice. The international community, including the Security Council, must redouble its efforts and use all available means to reaffirm that this is not true. There should be zero tolerance towards cases where women who have previously briefed the Security Council face threats and persecution. As stated in the Secretary-General's report, the relevant sanctions committees continue to be underutilized as a means of holding accountable those responsible for violations of women's rights.

Latvia strongly believes that the empowerment of women and their inclusive engagement, as well as gender equality, is an essential foundation for a peaceful, secure and sustainable society. It also applies to all aspects of international peace and security. For those reasons, gender equality and the rights of women are Latvia's longstanding priorities.

As a member State elected to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women until 2025 and as a Vice-Chair of the Commission's Bureau for the next two sessions, Latvia is committed to continuing

to play an active role in shaping and enforcing global standards and policies for gender equality. As of this year, Latvia has also become an elected member of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Latvia fully supports the commitment of the PBC to strengthening the role of women in the post-conflict phase. In addition, Latvia invests in United Nations efforts in a practical way by providing financial support to UN-Women. In 2021, for the first time Latvia made a financial contribution to UNICEF, which also plays an important role in broader efforts related to the women and peace and security agenda.

Latvia recognizes that effective measures leading to the global empowerment of women begin with responsive and responsible policies at home. On 14 July 2020, the Latvian Government approved Latvia's national action plan on women and peace and security for the period 2020-2025. The plan foresees three main tasks, which focus on raising public awareness of gender equality issues and the elimination of gender-based violence, especially in the younger generation; training in the defence and home affairs sector, including the establishment of a gender adviser's position; and the transfer of Latvia's experience and knowledge. All those tasks are being implemented in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations, civil society and our foreign partners. For example, the Latvian non-governmental organization MARTA Centre is actively involved in educating young women on gender equality, in particular in the European Union Eastern Partnership countries and Central Asian countries.

Let me conclude by reiterating a simple truth: women having a voice is a crucial and central premise of all human rights. The ability of women to speak up and to participate is an essential element of a prosperous, equal and safe world. It is important to break the silence. When the international community witnesses violence against women and girls, we must not sit back but act decisively.

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

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): At the outset, I wish to thank Norway for having organized this important open debate. I wish also to extend my thanks to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, for her briefing.

I had the honour to organize last October, in my capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission,

an ambassadorial meeting on women, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The Commission had a very rich discussion on how to enhance the leading role of women in efforts at peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Also last November and under the Egyptian presidency, the African Union Peace and Security Council held an open session on the implementation and commemoration of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

Egypt is currently developing its first national action plan on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. In that regard, Egypt believes that adopting action plans on women and peace and security is not sufficient. Adequate resources should be allocated to the implementation of such plans.

While the coronavirus disease pandemic and its far-reaching socioeconomic effects brought additional challenges to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, Egypt was keen to use the opportunity of virtual channels to advance the agenda's implementation. The Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding held a virtual dialogue on "Advancing the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in a new normal: women's leadership in preventing conflict and sustaining peace". The dialogue addressed the challenges and the opportunities offered by the response to the pandemic to advance the agenda.

The virtual dialogue shed light on the challenges hindering women's meaningful efforts in the area of peacebuilding, including the need to enhance Africa's digital infrastructure to provide better access to technology to women peacebuilders.

The recommendations of the dialogue fed into the substantive preparation of the second edition of the Aswan Forum, where they were presented and discussed with decision-makers, including African leaders and high-level officials from international and regional organizations, the private sector and civil society. Egypt was keen to make the Aswan Forum gender-balanced and to present a number of positive examples of women active in the fields of peace and security.

His Excellency the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt was one of the first leaders to join the Circle of Leadership initiative to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Raising awareness against sexual exploitation and

abuse is an integral part of the comprehensive training received by Egyptian and African forces prior to their deployment in peacekeeping operations.

Egypt takes pride in championing the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse since its seventy-first session, the latest of which is resolution 75/321, adopted last September. The resolution promotes a system-wide approach to implementing the zero-tolerance policy aimed at eliminating such heinous acts.

Egypt reiterates its emphasis on the importance of women's participation at the negotiating table and on building their capacities to enable them to effectively participate in peace negotiations and peacebuilding efforts.

In conclusion, Egypt calls for renewed political and moral commitments to further support and empower women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. Women are the fundamental agents of change during the transitional period from conflict to development. Their empowerment is a must for a healthy and coherent society aiming to achieve sustainable peace.

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

Mr. Hermann (Denmark): The Nordic countries almost have the final word. I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

The full implementation of the resolutions that constitute the women and peace and security agenda is a key priority for the Nordic countries. We thank successive presidencies of the Security Council for their commitment to ensuring a sustained focus on women and peace and security in the Council's work, and we welcome today's focus on addressing the protection gap that women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil-society representatives face. Their insights and recommendations are essential and must feed into actions concerning how to better ensure their future protection.

The realization of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes is at the heart of the women and peace and security agenda. A safe and enabling environment is a precondition for that.

Let us not forget that it is the duty of the international community and the States Members of the United Nations present here today to ensure an environment that enables women human rights defenders to exercise their right to participate in all aspects of public life in line with resolutions 2222 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019). That is first and foremost a rights issue, but it is also a crucial step towards building inclusive sustainable peace. The role of women human rights defenders is integral to all four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda — participation, protection, prevention and relief.

The increasing number of reprisals against women peacebuilders and human rights defenders on a global scale is alarming, as also highlighted by the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, which covers reprisals concerning the United Nations system as a whole.

Intimidation and reprisals against women peacebuilders and human rights defenders have taken on new forms during the pandemic, both offline and online. Through Front Line Defenders, the Nordics support a fast, flexible and effective 24-hour emergency service that responds to the protection needs of women human rights defenders who are at immediate risk.

In order to address the protection gap faced by women peacebuilders and human rights defenders, the Nordics wish to put forward the following points and recommendations.

First, it is imperative to address the protection gap through consultations with women peacebuilders and human rights defenders themselves, factoring in their unique risk assessments and needs in order to ensure their protection in a gender-transformative way. That also pertains to the Security Council. We encourage Council members to continue inviting women peacebuilders and human rights defenders to brief the Council, while engaging in tailored due diligence measures in order to ensure a safe and enabling space for their participation and — most important of all — to act on their recommendations and not just listen and take note.

Secondly, where prevention and mitigation fail, robust accountability measures are key. We call on Member States to adopt a zero-tolerance policy in order to address reprisals and follow up with robust

and systematic accountability measures against all perpetrators.

Thirdly, adopting concrete follow-up measures to reprisals involves ensuring that all relevant actors are informed of such incidents, including the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. That entails that all United Nations representatives and mechanisms include in their reporting references to credible allegations of intimidation, reprisals and hampering of United Nations access.

We therefore welcome Human Rights Council resolution 48/17, of October 2021, which invites the Secretary-General to submit the annual report presented annually to the Human Rights Council on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights also to the General Assembly, starting from its seventy-seventh session.

We would like to encourage that the report also be presented to the General Assembly, which would allow for information-sharing on matters of key importance for the United Nations system as a whole and consequently the full United Nations membership in order to ensure adequate follow-up to reprisals.

The Nordics are committed to working together with the United Nations at both the Headquarters and field levels to create a safe and enabling environment for women peacebuilders and human rights defenders. We appeal to Council members to incorporate language on protection mechanisms into the mandates of United Nations peace operations. We fully support the important work of human rights components within peace operations. They have a vital role to play in ensuring monitoring, reporting and ensuring gender-transformative support for human rights defenders and peacebuilders at risk on the ground.

The Nordics encourage the provision of rapid, flexible and targeted funding for the effective protection of women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society representatives. We welcome the funding window for women human rights defenders under the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund as an important new initiative. The threats against women human rights defenders in Afghanistan acted as a catalyst for that initiative.

Let me conclude by stating that it is our sincere aspiration that today's debate will be a vital first step towards more effectively addressing violence targeting women's participation in peace and security processes.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.