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New York

President: Mrs. Ngyema Ndong (Gabon)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Stastoli
Brazil	Mr. Jardim Oliveira
China	Mrs. Gui Dan
France	Mr. Samson
Ghana	Mr. Nsowah
India	Mr. Setia
Ireland	Ms. Ispas
Kenya	Ms. Mohammed
Mexico	Mrs. Vásquez Muñoz
Norway	Ms. Tranoey
Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
United Arab Emirates	Ms. Tantawy
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. O'Kelly
United States of America	Mr. Curiel

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups

Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2022/740)

Letter dated 4 October 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/743)

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The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President (*spoke in French*) : 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 Canada.

Ms. O'Neill (Canada): I am grateful for the invitation to deliver two separate statements today. The second will be on behalf of Canada, and the first will be on behalf of 64 member States of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, an informal network representing all five regional groups of the United Nations and the European Union.

In Afghanistan, Haiti, Myanmar, the Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen and many other countries, women and girls are working courageously to build peace and shape their countries' futures. Amidst a sharp rebound of militarization and misogyny, they are demonstrating, at great risk to their own safety, their determination, resilience and capacities. Yet women and girls in conflict-affected contexts in particular continue to be excluded from decision-making and targeted with discrimination and violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.

Women leaders have made clear what the international community must do. We, as 64 member States, reiterate seven commitments.

First, we must protect, respect and promote the autonomy and human rights of all women and girls.

Secondly, we must advocate for and support women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and leadership, at all stages and levels and in all political and peace processes, and we reiterate our call on the United Nations to lead by example by making women's participation in United Nations-led peace processes a requirement.

Thirdly, we must create a safe and enabling environment for all women peacebuilders, human rights defenders, civil society leaders, journalists and advocates for gender equality to carry out their invaluable work, including by championing their role, amplifying their voices, swiftly and unequivocally condemning attacks, intimidation and reprisals against them and ensuring adequate, predictable, sustained and

flexible funding so they can carry out their important work safely and independently.

Fourthly, we continue to call on the United Nations itself to champion the important work of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders, as well as advocates for gender equality, to provide all necessary protection and support for those at risk and to establish clear protocols for how all United Nations entities should respond.

Fifthly, we call on the Security Council to ensure that all peacekeeping operations and special political missions provide, monitor and report on support to women peacebuilders and human rights defenders at risk and fully support and facilitate independent civil society contributions to the work of the Council.

Sixthly, we must prevent and respond to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination, such as by ensuring survivors' access to essential services, including sexual and reproductive health care, and to gender-responsive justice, by holding perpetrators of such acts to account. We will continue to encourage the Security Council to pursue the fight against impunity with all the means at its disposal and to incorporate and apply conflict-related sexual violence as a designation criterion in United Nations sanction regimes.

Finally, we commit to providing greater support for women and girls subjected to forced displacement and put at increased risk for violence and discrimination.

It is critical that the international community act now to close the gaps between the global commitments set out in the Council's now 10 resolutions on women and peace and security and their realization.

(spoke in French)

I will now address the Council on behalf of Canada.

(spoke in English)

Canada is profoundly concerned about the reversal of generational gains in women's rights, about the Taliban attempting to erase women from public life in Afghanistan — Zahra Nader referred to it this morning as "gender apartheid"; about attacks on often young, peaceful women protesters in Iran and the Sudan; about conflict-related sexual violence in Ethiopia, Haiti, Myanmar and as part of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine; and about the murders of women climate activists and about the dangerous disinformation

campaigns targeting women peacebuilders and human rights defenders.

As we reflect in this debate on ways in which women and girls, in all their diversity, are overcoming immense barriers, let us recognize, and thank them for, their resilience. But let us also be clear that our primary focus must be on addressing the factors that require them to be resilient in the first place.

Canada is proud to work with a wide range of partners around the world to support systemic changes. We are also looking inwards. Like many other countries, Canada is developing its next national action plan. To prepare, our primary civil-society partner, the Women, Peace and Security Network of Canada, sought input from across our country. Among the recommendations, it called on us to focus on the “peace” in women and peace and security and to bring a more feminist lens to the term “security”.

(spoke in French)

Its calls are relevant to us all in informing our next plan. We are broadening the national focus by addressing a wider range of security issues. We are recommitting to strong and predictable collaboration with civil society and indigenous representatives and to working together to mainstream anti-racist approaches in our work. We are determined to fully honour the empowerment of women peacebuilders in all their diversity, recognizing that support for them and for women’s movements is one of the greatest contributions that we can make to the prevention of violent conflict. We are also committed to working with them and all Member States to prevent and address the attacks and reprisals that they face.

(spoke in English)

Last year, I told the Security Council that Canada was determined to reflect and proceed with humility, and that we wanted to talk about our successes, but were also resolved to openly share our challenges (see S/PV.8886). In that spirit, our Department of National Defence undertook an independent assessment of barriers to the meaningful participation of women in the Canadian Armed Forces in peace operations. For that, we used the methodology developed through the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations. Last month, we made the results public.

We will keep deepening the work that we are doing within our own institutions, and, having renewed the

Elsie Initiative for another five years, we will keep working with partners globally to ensure receptive environments and root out harmful practices and unacceptable behaviours.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Türkiye): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the MIKTA Group of countries, namely, Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Türkiye and Australia. We would like to clearly express our appreciation to the Gabonese presidency for convening today’s Security Council debate on the women and peace and security agenda. The MIKTA Group of countries also thanks the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2022/740), which provides valuable assessments and recommendations on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

More than two decades ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), which set the foundation for guiding the women and peace and security agenda. 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 best efforts, its implementation has fallen short. The slow progress was exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic. A shadow pandemic of intensified violence against women and girls emerged, and humanitarian workers in conflict zones across the world continued to report increasing rates and harrowing cases on a daily basis. While we have a solid normative framework in place, we unfortunately see that its implementation is put aside during turbulent times, marked by wars, military coups or seizures of power by force, and during humanitarian crises resulting from natural disasters or other threats.

Recent events in countries such as Ukraine, Afghanistan and Myanmar vividly showed us how the fragile gains of the women and peace and security agenda can easily be rolled back, as well as how the rights, fundamental freedoms and well-being of women and girls can be violated with impunity. Conflict-related sexual violence remains a deep and persistent problem, as it continues to be used as a routine tactical element of war in situations of armed conflict. Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment constitute abhorrent violations of human rights, mainly affecting women and girls. It

is therefore imperative to coordinate and scale up our efforts for prevention and strengthen accountability.

The MIKTA Group of countries highlights the need for the international community to support national efforts in ensuring a survival-centred approach, and we believe that comprehensive assistance, including the provision of sexual and reproductive health services, should be provided to victims and survivors of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are priorities for the MIKTA Group in its efforts to strengthen the resilience of women and girls. Respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling the human rights, safety and well-being of all women and girls are essential for the achievement of resilient and sustainable peace and development. The MIKTA countries therefore remain committed to advancing the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all stages and at all levels of peace and security processes. We believe that women's political and economic empowerment is crucial to the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and the stabilization of societies emerging from armed conflict and to strengthening the resilience of women and girls against future risks of crisis.

In the same vein, the MIKTA countries recognize the key role that civil society, women's rights organizations and women peacebuilders and peacekeepers, as well as women's human rights defenders, play in promoting peace and security, particularly at the local level. We are deeply concerned to see that, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, women peacebuilders, journalists, human rights defenders and civil-society leaders face increasing challenges, including serious threats to their safety and freedom. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendations, and we are committed to reversing that deeply worrying trend.

The MIKTA Group also wishes to reiterate its support for the Secretary-General's system-wide Gender Parity Strategy and the Department of Peace Operations Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, which have had a significant impact on increasing the number of women represented within the United Nations leadership, as well as in peace operations.

As a unique cross-regional group of countries on different continents, the MIKTA Group underscores its unwavering commitment to advancing the implementation of the women and peace and security

agenda and its readiness to work with other Member States as we advance our common goal of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Only then can we truly achieve inclusive societies that allow for progress in establishing and maintaining peace and security, upholding human rights and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Ms. Hayovyshyn (Ukraine): We thank the presidency of the Security Council, Gabon, for having convened today's open debate. We also thank all the briefers for their comprehensive briefings. While the delegation of Ukraine aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the European Union, I would like to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

We express our strong solidarity with all the women and girls who at this very moment, despite all the often-life-threatening challenges and difficulties, show incredible courage and leadership in their countries. In Ukraine, we have witnessed that peace and security can be fragile, but what remains incredibly reliable and strong are people — men and women; they can never be defeated. During seven months of resistance by the entire Ukrainian nation to the Russian war against our country, women in Ukraine have been shaping their immediate future. Indeed, the current resilience in Ukraine has a particularly female face.

Despite the challenges posed by the destruction and shifting economic realities, Ukrainian women are organizing in ways that contribute to peace and security. They lead, and they take deliberate decisions in defence of their communities and their nation in both combat and non-combat roles. They are on the front lines of ensuring continuing education for the children in our country, addressing access to technology, physical and psychological health care and social protection for our people. They bear the sole responsibility for the care of themselves, their children and elderly family members. Each of them fulfils an individual rescue mission to save their loved ones. They are also on the front lines of military defence,

Women's participation in the security and defence sector in Ukraine has increased tremendously. Over 38,000 women are serving in a military capacity in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, with the total number of women in the armed forces reaching 50,000. Over

5,000 are defending our country on the front lines. This is a concrete example of how important women to the defence of their own country.

Strengthening women's leadership around the world is of vital importance, and there are many ways to do that. I would like to mention the initiative of the First Lady of Ukraine, Ms. Olena Zelenska, on holding annual summits of global first ladies and gentlemen, which is a cross-regional platform for soft power to advance dialogue and contribute to building a peaceful future. It is indeed an effective tool.

We welcome the important contributions to strengthening women's resilience and leadership made by Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

Ukraine's commitment to supporting women remains strong. Resolution 1325 (2000) and the women and peace and security agenda have always been important for our country. Ukraine is the first State Member of the United Nations to adopt a national action plan under conditions of war. Its second national action plan will be updated soon, reflecting the consequences of the Russian aggression, as Russian forces in Ukraine have actively targeted women. According to Special Representative Patten, rapes and sexual assaults attributed to Moscow's forces in Ukraine are part of the Russian military strategy. Ukraine has therefore partnered with the United Nations to prevent and respond to all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, to ensure meaningful justice through holding the perpetrators accountable. And we may well become a model for reparations and compensation for victims of sexual violence in conflict.

Today I would like to pay tribute to all women who sacrificed their lives for peace in their own countries. It happens in all corners of the world. It happens every day, and it is happening now. The least we can do is forgo indifference, act and bring justice.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Oehri (Liechtenstein): We gather at a time of enormous turmoil and tension around the globe. Military expenditures have increased, which often comes at the cost of social spending. Funding for women's organizations has decreased, as has women's

participation in peace negotiations. And the United Nations peacekeeping missions are not on track to reach gender parity at all levels by 2028.

These trends are clearly going in the wrong direction, preventing the fulfilment of the goals set in the Security Council's resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda. And these trends are deeply harmful, given the vast evidence that gender equality offers an effective path to conflict prevention and sustainable peace: women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peacekeeping and peace operations has resulted in improved mandate delivery; their inclusion in peace talks has proven indispensable for forging lasting peace agreements; and their contributions as mediators, journalists and human rights defenders have been crucial for political change.

We are particularly concerned about the increased violence against women human rights defenders when standing up for peace, democracy and the rule of law, from Belarus to Afghanistan. The killing of Mahsa Amini in Iran — who is a symbol of the many thousands who have peacefully protested for their rights and freedoms — must be condemned in the strongest terms. We must speak with a unified voice in support of respecting human rights and show solidarity with and protect those who have taken to the streets to protest the systematic oppression of women's rights since Mahsa's killing.

We also ask the Security Council to adopt a text that sends a strong message to end the violence against the civilian population in Myanmar, including killings and arbitrary detention of women activists, and to call on Member States to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar, taking up the call from the General Assembly in its resolution last year (General Assembly resolution 75/287).

We are concerned about the increase in conflict-related sexual violence documented in 2021. Reports of sexual enslavement by members of armed groups are particularly horrifying. While sexual and gender-based violence disproportionately affects women and girls, men and boys are specifically targeted in such contexts as detention settings and child recruitment. It is often used as a weapon of war and to attack civilian populations, as also documented by the All Survivors project in Afghanistan and Syria, among other situations.

We are particularly concerned about the risk of sexual exploitation and the trafficking of women and children fleeing Ukraine as a result of the Russian aggression. An effective response to human trafficking must also include private and financial-sector actors, as called for in resolution 2331 (2016). The “Finance against Slavery and Trafficking” initiative (FAST) initiated by Liechtenstein more than three years ago has undertaken activities in the areas of prevention and financial inclusion. In this context, FAST has collaborated with Eastern European financial intelligence units to promote European financial-inclusion measures. And as a result of a joint financial-inclusion initiative with FAST, the three largest banks in Liechtenstein are providing refugees from Ukraine with fee-free bank accounts. This is but one example of the impact the financial sector can have in preventing and responding to trafficking and slavery and in empowering women who account for the majority of the 50 million victims worldwide.

Accountability remains key to addressing conflict-related sexual violence and is a matter of prevention. International criminal-justice mechanisms have significantly advanced our efforts to fight impunity, including groundbreaking verdicts on sexual and gender-based violence by the International Criminal Court. The pioneering role of the Rome Statute with its gender-sensitive approach can serve as a source of inspiration for national and regional courts as well as other accountability mechanisms. We applaud, in particular, the strong gender perspective of the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism and commend the recent launch of its gender strategy. It contributes to a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the patterns of persecution and helps strengthen accountability for the crimes committed in Syria by all parties.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Lagdameo (Philippines): The Philippines thanks Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the briefers for their very useful briefings.

Peace is possible and more durable with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. The Philippines is proof of this. For decades, peace was elusive in the southern Philippines. A women-led peace process, which held inclusive dialogue that embraced all stakeholders, forged the way to what is

now the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). One of the first acts passed by the Bangsamoro parliament created the Bangsamoro Women Commission (BWC). Mandated to advance the rights and welfare of women, the BWC launched a regional action plan on women, peace and security. The regional action plan complements the national action plan to better localize women, peace and security in the BARMM.

United Nations agencies in the Philippines worked with the Commission to develop the regional action plan. Partnership between the United Nations and the Government has been instrumental in implementing the goals of the women and peace and security agenda. Last year, the Government partnered with UN-Women to provide leadership workshops with former female combatants and families of former insurgents. This training provided a platform to discuss justice and reconciliation and strengthened participants’ capacities to lead as peacebuilders in their communities.

Going forward, the Philippines is reviewing lessons learned from our third-generation national action plan on women, peace and security. These lessons will strengthen the crafting of the next version of our national action plan. We remain determined to fully and effectively implement this women, peace and security agenda. We do this because we know that this is indispensable to achieving peace for all.

We encourage Member States to develop their own action plans, share and learn good practices and work with all stakeholders. We do not underestimate the challenge of resolving conflict and the tortuous journey ahead. However, there are no short cuts to peace. We can get there only if women have an equal place at the helm.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Luxembourg thanks the Gabonese presidency of the Security Council for convening today’s open debate. We also thank the Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women, the African Union Special Envoy and Ms. Zahra Nader for their briefings.

Luxembourg fully aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union, the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the Group

of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, and I would like to add a few points in my national capacity.

Despite all the efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda since it was launched 22 years ago, women are still too often excluded from peace processes. Despite being marginalized, women are putting their lives on the line and being subjected to intimidation, reprisals and physical violence as they strive to take action on the ground to ensure the peace and prosperity of their communities. To support them, we suggest focusing on three areas of action — justice, education and support for regional and national efforts.

First, with regard to justice, in conflict zones around the world, including areas controlled by armed groups, women and girls are at an unprecedented risk of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. In that regard, safe and secure access to justice for women and girls must be guaranteed. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to strengthen support for women human rights defenders and accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict situations. Luxembourg is concerned about the high incidence of sexual and gender-based violence committed by Russia's armed forces in its war of aggression against Ukraine. There must be no impunity for those crimes.

Secondly, concerning education, hindrances to women's participation can appear at an early age if young girls are deprived of an adequate education, including as a result of insecurity. In that regard, Luxembourg supports the efforts of the Niger, whose President has just launched a boarding-school initiative for girls in order to provide them with accessible, safe, quality and sustainable education. Luxembourg reiterates its commitment to a safe school environment in the spirit of the Safe Schools Declaration, which we encourage all Member States to endorse.

Lastly, with respect to support for regional and national efforts, the increased activity of terrorist and violent extremist groups has serious implications for the safety of women and girls, especially in West Africa and the Sahel. It is crucial to work hand in hand with regional and national partners to promote the rights of women and girls. Luxembourg is proud to support the work of the Office of Ms. Bineta Diop, the African Union Special Envoy on Women and Peace and Security, aimed at protecting women and girls in the Sahel from sexual and gender-based violence, in

partnership with the Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development. In another example, a Luxembourg police officer deployed with the European Union Police and Rule of Law Mission for the occupied Palestinian territory helped to launch a network of female Palestinian civilian police personnel in May.

Luxembourg's support for strengthening the role of women as agents for peace is part of our feminist foreign policy and our national action plan on women and peace and security. The Council can count on our continued commitment to supporting women and girls, without whom peace, security and prosperity cannot be achieved and whose resilience should be an example to us all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malta.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Gabon for convening this year's annual open debate and the briefers for their statements.

Malta aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Many conflicts and crises around the world continue to disproportionately affect women and girls. The women and peace and security agenda cannot be realized without the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls, in all their diversity and in all aspects of peace and security. Malta recognizes the immense bravery of the many women at risk, including human rights defenders, peacebuilders and women with disabilities, who continue to make active and tangible contributions to their societies. They are crucial leaders of change, and yet they still face gendered obstacles.

The Russian war on Ukraine has led to the displacement of millions of women and girls, leaving them especially vulnerable to conflict-related sexual violence. Courageous women in Myanmar continue to face risks of sexual violence, arbitrary execution and torture in their quest for democracy. In Afghanistan, the Taliban's regressive policies have set back women's and girls' rights and have violated and threatened LGBTIQ persons, based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. In Syria, millions of women and children still live in catastrophic humanitarian conditions. In Ethiopia, parties responsible for sexual violence have not been held accountable, while the ongoing conflict

in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to have devastating effects on women and girls.

Women are still at the forefront of protests asking for change, as seen in Iran, the Sudan and Yemen. Their daily struggles should ignite our resolve to act and uphold women's rights and gender equality. Member States need to ensure consistent, visible and solid political support for women. We firmly believe in the need to redouble efforts to end impunity and strengthen accountability when it comes to investigating cases of intimidation, attacks or reprisals against civil-society organizations and women human rights defenders.

Literacy and education have pivotal roles in strengthening women's resilience and leadership. Women-led initiatives often make communities more resilient in the face of conflict. The Secretary-General's most recent report on women and peace and security (S/2022/740) discusses the gendered impact of small arms and light weapons on women and girls. In that regard, women-led organizations can lead strategies to address those effects, especially at the community level. We encourage Member States to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, whose commitments can contribute to facilitating the participation of women in decision-making at all levels. National action plans continue to be a critical tool for countries to prioritize the women and peace and security agenda in national and foreign policy. In 2020, we launched our first action plan, reaffirming our commitment to strengthening peace and security. During our tenure on the Security Council in 2023 and 2024, Malta aims to support regular, diverse and independent civil-society participation in the work of the Council.

As the Secretary-General's report on women and peace and security further notes, there has been an increase in the number of women briefers in the Council. As we move closer to taking our seat in the Council, Malta is proud to also join the statement of shared commitments initially spearheaded by the consecutive presidencies of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico. We hope that will lead to greater visibility of the women and peace and security agenda and of gender issues more broadly.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): I would like to thank Gabon for organizing today's important annual open debate on women and peace and security. I would also

like to express my thanks to all the briefers who spoke earlier today. It is always important to recall Africa's role in bringing the women and peace and security agenda before the Security Council.

Egypt is working extensively to expand and deepen partnerships in support of the women and peace and security agenda, especially between the United Nations and the African Union. In that connection, in June Egypt hosted the third edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development, entitled "Africa in an Era of Cascading Risks and Climate Vulnerability: Pathways for a Peaceful, Resilient and Sustainable Continent", where we witnessed rich discussions and in-depth deliberations. The Forum concluded with reaffirming the need for flexible and sustainable financing for women and youth-led initiatives, aiming to address peace, security and climate-change risks and how to build economic resilience, as well as leveraging women's crucial role in building resilience, including by advancing their meaningful participation in decision-making, climate action and peacebuilding efforts.

Egypt is keen to advance the women and peace and security agenda through a holistic approach that aligns efforts across the peace continuum so as to enhance its effectiveness and impact, which is highly relevant in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. In that regard, Egypt takes pride in championing the resolution on United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse, which the General Assembly has adopted annually since its seventy-first session, the most recent instance being resolution 76/303, adopted on 2 September. That resolution promotes a system-wide approach to implementing the zero-tolerance policy on eliminating such heinous acts.

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

Egypt is eager to stress the major importance of ensuring the necessary balance in the implementation of the four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda — prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery — while ensuring national ownership and taking into consideration the cultural

and societal specificities of each country dealing with armed conflict or emerging from it.

In conclusion, Egypt calls for renewed political and moral commitments to further support and empower women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, including by investing in women's resilience and leadership. 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 (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by echoing other speakers today in congratulating Gabon on its leadership as President of the Security Council for the month of October.

I would like to highlight in particular the objective and multidimensional focus applied to the different aspects of the issue on our agenda, which increasingly encompasses an analysis of the specific problems that women face in armed conflict situations.

A few days ago, I participated in a forum on the impact of armed conflict on the lives of women and girls. I heard at first hand a number of heart-wrenching testimonies of the senseless and relentless violence that destroys lives and extinguishes hope. The commitment that Ecuador has undertaken in that regard to ensure full respect for the rights of women and girls is one we will strive to strengthen every day. We must take concrete action so that victims do not suffer in silence, while giving them a voice that can be heard in the Security Council.

Ecuador's position on the issue has been steadfast throughout the years. The international community cannot remain indifferent to the voices of the thousands of women and girls across various conflict zones who are calling for justice. Multilateralism offers spaces in which to make such issues visible and to listen to victims, promote and support cooperation between regional organizations and analyse conflicts from a holistic perspective. Moreover, we require multilateralism to lead by example when it comes to respect for human rights and to act as an ally to strengthen national systems for accountability, justice and reparations for the victims of armed groups.

Ecuador reiterates its support for the appeal issued on 27 September, together with current and other incoming members of the Security Council, for the Taliban to reverse the decision taken to prevent girls from accessing secondary education. Girls have the right to an education, and women have a right to participate in all areas of public life. It is vital that women and girls be able to enjoy their rights and that, through those rights, they be permitted to fulfil their hopes and dreams.

The Council must work closely with other United Nations organs to strengthen the women and peace and security agenda and promote the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We will bolster those efforts during our 2023-2024 term on the Council.

The increased presence of women in peacekeeping operations and their enhanced participation in conflict resolution processes will lead to positive results, strengthen resilience and promote women's participation in public life and in leadership roles in those areas plagued by armed groups.

Finally, in line with the principles my country staunchly defends, Ecuador has signed the statement of shared commitments to promote the women and peace and security agenda, the implementation of which we continue to resolutely support as we seek to bolster the presence and participation of women. In that connection, we endorse the press statement made this morning calling on other delegations to join that endeavour.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia appreciates the efforts of the Security Council, and of the Gabonese presidency in particular, to recognize the importance of women's leadership in achieving peaceful conflict resolution and peace.

The new Government of President Petro Urrego prioritizes the development of policies and programmes with a cross-cutting gender approach, taking into account the needs and interests of all women in conflict situations, especially those of indigenous, rural and African descent, who suffer disproportionately from the impacts of all forms of violence.

Our new peace policies and programmes will be formulated and implemented with the participation

of women, ensuring our political representation, our right to a life free from violence and the exercise of our autonomy to decide on matters pertaining to our bodies and all other areas of our lives. As the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2022/740), we believe that guaranteeing women's rights, including our sexual and reproductive health and rights, is a necessary condition for women to live and to be able to contribute to peace and security. For that reason, we are pleased that the Secretary-General recognizes the progress that my country has made in that regard.

Peacebuilding requires acknowledgement of the various issues and challenges that women experience in all our forms of diversity, especially those of us who live through armed, political, cultural and environmental conflicts. The Government of Colombia, which includes Vice-President Francia Márquez Mina, an Afro-Colombian woman, and myself as its representative, an indigenous woman of the Arhuaco people, will contribute to recognizing and guaranteeing access to power for women who belong to minorities — not only ethnic minorities but also gender, sexual orientation, generational and regional minorities.

As women, we have the knowledge and skills to mediate and resolve conflicts between armed and unarmed actors in a peaceful, successful and sustainable manner. For that reason, my Government is committed to implementing affirmative measures to guarantee gender equity in peacebuilding and peace consolidation processes. In particular, it is committed to implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace through a cross-cutting approach that respects women's various identities.

My Government is making rapid progress in developing a road map and rolling out its national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We agree with the Secretary-General that national action plans continue to be a key tool for prioritizing issues related to women, peace and security in national and foreign policy. In that process, we have enjoyed the practical and logistical support of UN-Women in facilitating dialogue with civil-society organizations and sharing good practices and lessons learned. In addition to that and to the increase in women's representation in the elections to our legislature, our work in terms of political participation is already reflected in, among other things, a parity Cabinet and

our development of a feminist foreign policy with a gender-transformative approach.

I would like to conclude by underscoring Colombia's progress in one of the areas that the Secretary-General highlights in his report. Colombian women play a decisive role in the work of the Truth Commission, whose historic report includes a chapter dedicated to women and members of the LGBTI community. Despite the challenges that remain, we have tangible proof that transformations are possible if women wield decision-making power. We are aware that we have a long way to go, but we are certain that only by strengthening the role of women in their communities and acknowledging their contributions will we be able to build comprehensive peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Ms. Malefane (South Africa): I have the honour to present this statement as South Africa's focal point on women and peace and security.

I would like to thank the delegation of Gabon for convening this annual open debate on women and peace and security under the theme "Strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups". We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2022/740) and the briefers — Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Executive Director of UN-Women Sima Bahous and the representatives of civil society — for their insightful interventions.

South Africa fully supports the Security Council's continuing attention to the women and peace and security agenda throughout this year. We see it as a demonstration of the sustained commitment of the United Nations and its Member States to supporting gender equality, women's empowerment and leadership and ways to advance women's full, equal, meaningful and effective participation in peace processes. Despite the Council's efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda, its implementation has not translated into concrete progress on the ground. The Secretary-General's latest report on the subject recognizes the progress that has been made, as well as the challenges that are still to be tackled. It has become clear that an increase in violent conflicts, increasing activity by terrorist and armed groups on the African continent, military coups and unconstitutional changes of Government have had a negative impact

on the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda.

Armed groups are posing greater challenges to the implementation of the agenda because of their expanded activities. They not only undermine State authority but engage in activities that violate international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including conflict-related sexual violence and restrictions on women and girls' participation in public life, which fuel conflicts and exacerbate violence against women and the marginalization of women's participation in peace processes. A key challenge concerning such armed groups is the difficulty of holding them to account for their illegal actions. With a view to strengthening women's resilience and leadership in such situations, South Africa would like to share the following points.

First, it is important not only to combat the activities of armed and terrorist groups and their resurgence, proliferation and financing, but also to address their genesis. A whole-of-society approach, with all segments of the communities concerned represented, including women, is needed to address the proliferation and presence of armed groups in the countries affected. However, a regional approach is also needed for armed groups that have inter-State and regional effects that result in large numbers of refugees and the displaced. We are seeing that in most regions on the African continent. Measures taken to combat the activities of armed and terrorist groups should also not be used against women's civil-society organizations, human rights defenders or journalists. In that regard, adherence to obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law, remains critical.

Secondly, women in conflict-affected situations are usually marginalized, and their access to and control of productive resources are limited, as are their economic opportunities compared to men's. The women and peace and security agenda should therefore always be linked to the promotion of women's economic empowerment. It is by protecting women's civil, political, economic and social rights, including in situations of armed conflict, that they will see their equal and meaningful participation in public life and in decision-making bodies realized. That also extends to the protection of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Thirdly, we believe that women's organizations and networks are of cardinal importance in fostering

solidarity, cooperation and coordination on issues concerning women in armed conflict. We are reminded of the activities of our own South African Women in Dialogue, which since its inception in 2003 has shared the experiences of South African women in peace negotiations and peacebuilding with various African countries affected by conflict, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Sudan, among others. We also recognize the significant role of the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network in contributing to peace in that region, which is an area that was once overrun by armed groups. We believe that they are some of the best practices for emulating in building resilience and support for women in regions plagued by armed groups. We are pleased that, in the past few years, a number of global networks have been established to accelerate the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. South Africa currently co-chairs the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network and the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), important platforms that galvanize support and engage in critical advocacy aimed at advancing the women and peace and security agenda at the national, regional and global levels. Key to their activities is sharing experiences and conducting fact-finding missions through solidarity field missions, such as the AWLN Baeriswyl solidarity missions to Mozambique and Mali.

Fourthly, the continuous skilling, training and capacity-building of women in all sectors is important so that they can meaningfully participate in peace processes. South Africa continues to contribute to training and capacity-building for women in peace processes at the continental and local levels. We conduct annual youth and women's training programmes on conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation, which are offered by our Foreign Ministry to women from conflict-affected countries. Some of the trainees are now members of various peacebuilding initiatives in their respective countries.

Fifthly, we are concerned about the vulnerabilities of women involved in promoting peace and security in conflict-affected countries. Understandably, the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security for the current period is dedicated to supporting women human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil society. Consistent with resolution 2493 (2019), Member States should create environments that are conducive for all women involved in the promotion of

the women and peace and security agenda to carry out their work independently, without fear or intimidation. Any violations of the rights of women, including those of women journalists, should be condemned and the perpetrators must be held accountable. We also believe that it is necessary for those women's organizations to be provided with the resources to carry out their work, an issue also raised in resolution 2493 (2019).

Sixthly and finally, we would like to address the issue of conflict-related sexual violence, a major scourge in conflict situations. We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for developing the Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on Investigation and Prosecution of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. That framework will aid the relevant national authorities in addressing acts of conflict-related sexual violence and rendering justice.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to warmly thank the President for organizing today's open debate, and the briefers for their valuable contributions.

The world is full of suffering, but it is also full of overcoming — that is how women's rights activist Helen Keller described resilience. The Afghan author Homeira Qaderi also illustrates that in her memoir *Dancing in the Mosque*, in which she recounts her adolescence in Herat under the Taliban regime, where she managed, clandestinely, to teach young girls and become a literary scholar herself.

Homeira Qaderi is exceptional, but she is not an exception. Women are very often on the front line of peacebuilding in their communities, not only in Afghanistan but also in Myanmar, the Sahel and Ukraine, to give only a few examples. Women courageously engage in conflict prevention and resolution as well as in efforts for reconstruction, humanitarian aid and justice. In many countries, they are at the forefront of movements against authoritarian regimes and refuse to accept political proposals that do not guarantee their rights.

Nevertheless, we are seeing challenges to our gender-equality gains. The gap between normative frameworks and reality continues to widen, while women are missing out on opportunities to invest their

immense potential in the future of their countries. Relying primarily on women's resilience is neither sustainable nor fair. The Security Council has both the duty and the power to support women peacemakers and ensure that their rights are respected. As an elected member of the Security Council, Switzerland will make the following contributions.

In the Council itself, my country will seek to pursue a systematic, innovative and action-oriented approach. We will aim to integrate the women and peace and security agenda in all contexts into the Council's agenda and to prevent reprisals. In that regard, we will join the women and peace and security presidency shared commitments.

With regard to action on the ground, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/740) illustrates that we are far from achieving the equal and meaningful participation of women in all their diversity and at all stages of peace processes. Switzerland will therefore continue to support the creation of networks of women mediators and peacebuilders, such as those in Lebanon, where we support networking efforts among women from different political backgrounds. We will focus on women's participation in peace processes and continue to listen to the voices of civil society.

Finally, the success of all those efforts hinges on ensuring a safe environment for women's participation. The increase in attacks on schools targeting female students and teachers, as well as the large number of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, signal a disturbing negative trend. Respect for international humanitarian law is an absolute obligation for all actors, including non-State armed groups. When those rights are not respected, the Council must use the instruments at its disposal to ensure accountability. The inclusion of sexual and gender-based violence designation criteria in sanctions regimes is one such tool, and we will therefore lend our support to those efforts.

The Council is regularly briefed by women peacemakers and human rights defenders. It is essential for the Council not only to rely on the resilience of those women but also to take action to fully implement the normative framework of the women and peace and security agenda, to which my country will contribute.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Madam President, for convening today's important annual debate on women and peace and security, with a focus on women's resilience and leadership. I thank the Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the civil-society representatives for their briefings.

Achieving sustainable peace and resilience in conflict-affected countries requires comprehensive and context-specific measures that ensure the human security of every individual. With that in mind, Japan has placed support for women's resilience and leadership at the core of its second national action plan on women and peace and security, in which 79 actions to that end are listed, such as supporting women to participate, including in leadership and active roles, in formal and informal peace negotiations and the decision-making of peacebuilding processes.

Those actions have been reflected in the assistance on the ground. For example, Japan has continued to support a UN-Women-led project in Afghanistan to enhance the resilience and leadership of internally displaced and conflict-affected women and civil-society stakeholders. Livelihood skills training has enabled women to launch their community-based essential economic activities.

At the same time, leadership training was provided to women's civil-society organizations working for enhanced resilience. Japan also supported another UN-Women-led multi-partner project in the Lake Chad region in Cameroon and Nigeria, which successfully concluded last year. That project provided agricultural skills training to women who were affected by Boko Haram. Leadership training was also provided to civil-society stakeholders to prevent violent extremism. As evidenced by those examples, women's resilience and leadership can be effectively pursued in tandem.

Since 2014, Japan has hosted five iterations of the World Assembly on Women in Tokyo, where the world's national leaders in various fields gather to discuss gender equality and women's empowerment. Women and peace and security has always been a key agenda item of the World Assembly for Women, with in-depth discussions in that regard. After its coronavirus disease hiatus, the sixth World Assembly for Women is coming back on 3 December and will be held in Tokyo, with women's participation in peace and security featured in the conference. I trust that it will be an excellent

opportunity to strengthen partnerships and accelerate actions for the shared mission among member States and other various stakeholders.

We are not short on ideas. What we need are actions to enhance women's reliance and leadership in a sustainable manner. Japan looks forward to becoming an even more integral part of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): Poland commends Gabon for convening this important debate. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General for her statement and for the valuable report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/740), and to all the briefers for their insightful and thought-provoking remarks.

Poland aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, which underscore the importance of keeping the issue of women and peace and security high on the agenda of all relevant United Nations bodies, especially now, when the number of violent conflicts is higher than it has ever been since 1945. Sadly, this year's anniversary of the unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) is not a moment for celebration, against the dire backdrop of a surge in violent conflict and a reversal of generational gains in women's rights.

The takeover of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan has practically wiped out the decades of progress that had been made in women's recognition, protection and participation in public life. Instead, restrictions and obstacles on women's rights continue to mount and their right to political participation has been virtually eliminated. As a result, it is not only women but the whole of Afghan society that is suffering from the disruption of education, social and business processes.

In Ukraine, we are witnessing the devastating impact of Russia's aggression, which is deliberately targeting the civilian population and civilian infrastructure and disproportionately affecting women and girls. It is horrifying that as Pramila Patten, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, recently stated, the rapes and sexual assaults attributed to Moscow's forces in

Ukraine are part of Russia's military strategy and a deliberate tactic to dehumanize the victims. We need to create efficient mechanisms to protect and support women, including those forced into immigration or displacement, who are more vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination.

In times of crisis and proliferating armed conflicts, women's full, equal and meaningful participation in conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and peacebuilding faces significant obstacles. Despite all the challenges, the women in Afghanistan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Ukraine, Syria, the Sudan, Yemen and other war- and conflict-ridden countries have continued working to build and sustain peace. Their heroic resistance shows us that brute force will never win against the human need for dignity and freedom. Violence and intimidation targeting women peacebuilders and human rights defenders are aimed at preventing them from participating in political engagement and curbing their public activity and are therefore a serious threat to peace, democracy and human rights. The current women and peace and security normative framework is robust, but the international community's support strategies and response mechanisms are still inadequate and underdeveloped. Our main goal should therefore be the development of effective protection mechanisms that will empower all women and make good use of their resilience and strength. Our actions should be more decisive. They also need to be more focused and coordinated. The crucial task remains to treat obligations under the women and peace and security agenda as an indispensable part of other multi-annual and global United Nations strategies and agendas, in particular those related to peace and security and development.

Let me also emphasize the involvement of the younger generation in building a culture of equality between women and men and a culture of lasting peace and security. Members of the younger generation, both girls and boys, have a special role to play. They will have a fundamental impact on the kind of world we will live in. The sooner we commit to providing adequate education and skills, the sooner we will lay the foundations for lasting peace and security, sustainable development, resilience and future prosperity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Massari (Italy): Italy welcomes the initiative of Gabon to convene the Security Council's annual open debate on women and peace and security, which enables us to reiterate our strong support for resolution 1325 (2000) and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

Italy aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union, the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, and would like to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

Promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all areas of public life and in our main decision-making processes is key to bringing change and fostering peaceful coexistence. Since the adoption of the historic resolution 1325 (2000) a lot has been accomplished, but women and girls continue to bear a disproportionate burden in conflict and remain under- or unrepresented in peace-process efforts, in spite of their constructive contribution to conflict resolution at the grass-roots level and their presence on the front lines.

Italy has a long-standing tradition of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. We have strongly supported resolution 1325 (2000) since its adoption, and we devote significant effort and resources to promoting women's participation in peace and international mediation processes. Women have proved to be extremely successful in protecting civilians, accessing communities and creating relationships of trust with local populations, especially the most vulnerable categories. Peacebuilding and peacekeeping also mean mediation, a sector in which women have proved to be particularly effective. It has been demonstrated that peace agreements are 20 per cent more likely to last at least two years and 35 per cent more likely to last 15 years when women are included in peace processes.

At the national level, we are implementing our fourth action plan on women and peace and security, and we are a proud supporter of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, launched in October 2017 to promote gender equality and foster women's inclusion in peace processes, mediation efforts and peacebuilding in the Mediterranean region. The Network offers training, capacity-building and networking opportunities and has led to the establishment of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators Network in September

2019, uniting voices from six different regions of the world in a call to accelerate the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on the ground.

At the international level, we have strengthened our partnership with the United Nations system in favour of women and girls through increased core funding to UN-Women and policy commitments. We support the action of United Nations agencies on the ground in working for the full realization of Sustainable Development Goal 5, and we have also increased our financial support to UN-Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. We strongly support the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, and we firmly believe in the benefits that the presence of well-integrated female personnel in peacekeeping operations provides. We also uphold the importance of streamlining the women and peace and security agenda in all the relevant discussions of the Council.

In conclusion, the participation of women is a key requisite for creating resilient, inclusive and peaceful communities. We remain fully committed to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in our efforts to pursue the reinforcement of the global peacekeeping and peacebuilding architecture.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Marschik (Austria): Austria also aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

We very much appreciate Gabon's efforts to ensure an open and focused debate today, and we thank the briefers for sharing their views and encourage them to keep up their important work.

Austria commends the Secretary-General for his continued commitment to the women and peace and security agenda and UN-Women Executive Director Sima Bahous for spearheading women's rights and empowerment.

Once again, the annual women and peace and security report (S/2022/740) paints a grim picture of the situation of women and girls in conflict-affected countries. We are facing a triple crisis in terms of security, the global humanitarian situation and human rights. And as so often occurs, women and girls are disproportionately affected. Despite the clear evidence that gender equality and the meaningful inclusion of

women in decision-making processes contribute to sustainable peace and conflict prevention, we seem to be moving in the opposite direction.

Russia's illegal war against Ukraine painfully shows the devastating effects of armed conflict on women and girls. As if targeted attacks on civilian neighbourhoods and institutions, including schools and hospitals, were not enough, sexual and gender-based violence is being used as a weapon of war. We need decisive action to sanction such crimes. Austria therefore supports the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, in Vienna, and the ongoing investigations of the International Criminal Court, in Ukraine.

Those committed to the women and peace and security agenda must implement it in their foreign, security and development policies and in their humanitarian assistance. That is not always easy to do, as we all know, but Austria would like to share some examples of what we do in that respect.

This year, €15 million of the Austrian international emergency relief fund are earmarked for projects supporting Ukrainian women and children in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. A gender-responsive approach is integrated in all our efforts to support Ukraine, including immediate and longer-term responses. Local civil society organizations, especially women's rights organizations, are critical in that regard.

As another example, recently €5 million of emergency assistance were given to UN-Women in Afghanistan. Austrian-funded projects include the establishment of the Afghan Women's Advisory Board in order to involve Afghan women in coordination processes and strategic discussions, as well as support for women human rights defenders. Austria will continue to support the efforts of UN-Women, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and its Rapid Response Window on women's participation in local peace processes, including in Afghanistan, Liberia, Mali and South Sudan.

As freedom, independence and plurality of media form the foundation of democratic societies, Austria underlines the need for a gender-responsive approach to the safety of journalists. We see that women journalists are at an increased risk of online and offline harassment, discrimination and violence — particularly in conflict zones, where women's voices often remain unheard. To mark the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of

Impunity, Austria will host an international conference on the safety of journalists on 3 and 4 November, with a special focus on female journalists.

In the area of peacekeeping, Austria continues to work on increasing the number of uniformed women in its military personnel. The Austrian Armed Forces remain committed to a gender perspective in military operations in order to enhance situational awareness and improve preventive and protective measures. To that end, a permanent advisory office to consider the gender perspective was recently established. We reiterate our call for the Security Council to systematically include the women and peace and security agenda in all mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and political missions.

Yes, there are a lot of challenges and negative developments in recent months, but there are also a few sparks of hope, and they deserve to be mentioned. Those include the crucial daily contributions of representatives of civil society, local women peacebuilders, mediators and human responders championing the women and peace and security agenda, such as the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and its partners. Together we have committed to continue implementing the women and peace and security agenda through targeted measures and joint action based on multilateral cooperation. Together we will make a difference.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Greece.

Mrs. Theofili (Greece): I warmly thank the Gabonese presidency for organizing this important event, as well as the briefers for their thorough interventions.

Greece fully aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, and wishes to add the following.

Strengthening women's resilience and leadership in conflict-torn areas requires coherent policy action directed towards ensuring effective protection of the rights and security of women and girls, in all their diversity and according to their actual needs and local realities; preventing and responding to violence and discrimination against them; as well as enhancing meaningful gender-equal participation and leadership in peace efforts.

I would now like to draw the Council's attention to an issue of paramount importance. I am referring to

security threats faced by women war correspondents and media workers, who cover first-hand, with great professionalism and self-sacrifice, the devastating realities of conflicts. In 2021, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights verified 29 cases of conflict-related killings of women, among them human rights defenders and journalists. I think that is only the tip of the iceberg: women journalists are often victims of undocumented conflict-related sexual violence, as well as discrimination and sexual harassment online and offline in the workplace.

In that regard, as my Austrian colleague noted earlier, Greece, together with a group of like-minded countries — Argentina, Austria, Costa Rica, France and Tunisia — already stressed the importance of employing a gender-responsive approach when addressing the safety of journalists in conflict environments through our joint initiative, General Assembly resolution 76/173, on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity.

Additionally, at the national level, Greece recently launched a task force on ensuring the protection, safety and enhancement of the status of journalists and media professionals. That inclusive national coordination mechanism aims at strengthening — nationally and internationally — the status of women journalists and of those who report on gender-equality issues. Nevertheless, let us not forget that the world of work for women journalists, especially those who cover conflicts, extends beyond the traditional workplace.

In conclusion, providing sustainable solutions to the persistent and multifaceted challenges posed by armed conflicts and their consequences on women and girls is an extremely difficult task. Investing in the potential of women peacebuilders, human rights defenders, local civil society leaders and journalists seems to be the right path towards peace, security and development in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, the statement delivered by the representative of Türkiye on behalf of MIKTA — Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Türkiye and Australia — and the statement to be delivered by the representative of Croatia on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

I would now like to deliver the following statement in our national capacity, highlighting several points.

First, in redoubling our efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls, the Republic of Korea recently allocated \$2 million of emergency funds to underpin the activities of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for survivors of gender-based violence in Ukraine and Moldova. We also emphasize a holistic approach in promoting the resilience of survivors, and we would like to mention the comprehensive support programme that we carried out with UNFPA in the northern parts of Iraq.

Secondly, the Republic of Korea echoes the need for women's full participation in all peace processes. In that vein, we remain committed to accomplishing gender parity among United Nations peacekeepers. The Republic of Korea made its first contribution of \$0.5 million to the Elsie Initiative Fund this year. The Republic of Korea will also host the female military officers course, together with UN-Women, to encourage the deployment of women military officers in peacekeeping operations.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw attention to the multiple difficulties faced by women defectors from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who make up 72 per cent of almost 34,000 North Korean defectors who have arrived in the Republic of Korea since the 1990s. It is appalling and heartbreaking that many of them reach the Republic of Korea only after years of enduring the risks of detainment, human trafficking, repatriation and subsequent reprisals, including torture and other cruel punishment.

In that regard, we would like to remind the neighbouring countries that the principle of non-refoulement should be equally applied to defectors from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Republic of Korea supports the settlement of women defectors in line with its women and peace and security national action plan. In our experience, the peer consultant training programme empowers women survivors themselves to contribute to enhancing the resilience of other survivors, based on a mutual understanding of each other's psychosocial needs.

As a country that faces formidable challenges in building its own peace on the Korean peninsula, and as a candidate for non-permanent membership of the

Security Council for the 2024-2025 term, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to translating the women and peace and security agenda into action, domestically and globally, in support of the resilience and leadership of women.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Türkiye, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Georgia, Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

I want to thank you, Madam President, and Gabon for organizing this very important open debate. I also want to thank the briefers not only for their inputs, but also for the work that their organizations do every day.

I want to take this opportunity to extend our appreciation for the unrelenting and crucial work of women leaders in the pursuit of peace and security around the world. For many years, the international community has agreed on how central it is to any peace effort that we support gender equality and women's full, equal and meaningful participation in conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution, relief and recovery efforts and long-term peacebuilding.

Yet we meet today against a backdrop of worsening pushback around the world against gender equality and women's and girls' full and equal enjoyment of all human rights. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have systematically excluded women and girls from all aspects of public life. In Ukraine, we see a highly disproportionate impact of Russia's war on women and girls. In other conflict situations, such as in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Syria, Yemen and in the Sahel region, we observe that women human rights defenders and politically active women are being persecuted, harassed or killed.

We echo the messages in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/740) and the open letter of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, signed by 481 civil-society organizations across the world: not only do we need to create a more enabling environment for women human rights defenders, women peacebuilders, women journalists and media workers, but we must simultaneously address and prevent

reprisals against them. We need to acknowledge that women leaders are often targeted for speaking up, and we strongly condemn threats or acts of reprisals against them. We urge the members of the Security Council to invite women human rights defenders and civil society to this table, while taking all the necessary actions and precautions to ensure their safety.

Armed groups, criminal gangs, increasing terrorist insurgencies and violent conflicts and wars have a devastating human impact, disproportionately affecting women and girls. We know that women and girls in areas affected by armed groups are often the victims of sexual and gender-based violence, including trafficking, forced migration and displacement. That is why the EU supports building the resilience of local civil-society networks and ensuring full access to comprehensive and human rights-based health services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services. The European Union takes targeted actions and commits substantial funding to the full and comprehensive implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, and we support the efforts of the United Nations to mainstream that agenda at all levels.

For example, in line with our action plan on women and peace and security, the EU is setting up consultative mechanisms with grass-roots women activists in all conflict-related settings, as well as conducting capacity-building and mentoring for women's leadership, to ensure that more peace processes can benefit from the knowledge and skills that women negotiators and mediators bring to the table.

In 2021, more than 70 per cent of the EU's new crisis-response and conflict-prevention actions had gender equality and the participation of women in peace processes either as their main objective or as a significant component.

Gender mainstreaming is also a guiding principle of the EU's 18 civilian and military missions and operations around the world. That gender focus is critical to increasing the effectiveness and impact of conflict prevention and crisis management, as well as to promoting the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and empowerment of all women and girls.

The EU empowers women human rights defenders and supports their resilience around the world. To provide just a few examples, we have supported the integration of a gender perspective into national and local efforts to prevent violent extremism, as well as the

participation of women civil-society leaders originating from, and working in, conflict-affected communities and communities affected by terrorism, including in Somalia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tunisia. In South Sudan, the EU is supporting the cohesion of communities and inclusive ceasefire and transitional security monitoring mechanisms through, among other things, the establishment and further strengthening of the capacity of a women's protection team. In Venezuela, the EU supports a targeted project on the participation and leadership of women in violence prevention and peacebuilding schemes in at-risk communities.

Furthermore, in Ukraine, we are engaged in the governmental efforts to integrate a gender perspective into the country's future recovery and in enhancing accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, including through our support to local Ukrainian women's rights and feminist organizations. With regard to Afghanistan, our work to ensure that Afghan women can contribute to political dialogues will continue, in particular through the Afghan Women Leaders Forum. This week, Zarifa Ghafari, an Afghan women's rights defender, was awarded the Council of Europe's North-South Prize.

We know that there are still many gaps that need to be addressed in the implementation of this agenda. We all need to prioritize gender equality and women and peace and security across all our work. Women across the world are redefining the word "courage". The EU is resolutely committed to strengthening the resilience and leadership of women and empowering them to fully participate in the building of long-lasting peace on all continents. We call on the international community to do more. We will not be able to build long-lasting peace without half of humankind.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): Namibia thanks you, Madam President, for organizing this important open debate on the issue of women and peace and security. As we commemorate the twenty-second anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) this month, we are encouraged, as always, by the overwhelming support for this agenda item.

Violent conflict disproportionately affects women and girls, intensifying pre-existing gender inequalities and discrimination.

Women are active agents of peace in armed conflict, yet their role as key players and change agents of peace remains largely unrecognized. Acknowledging and integrating their different understanding, experiences and capabilities into all aspects of peace operations is essential for sustaining peace. The resilience of Namibian women during our country's 30-year-long struggle for independence from the apartheid South African regime lies at the core of Namibia's early and engaged involvement in the initiation of resolution 1325 (2000) 22 years ago. Not only did women provide food, shelter and moral support, but they also led political initiatives, including through petitioning international organizations such as this one in the 1970s, essentially challenging old beliefs and binary stereotypes of active males versus passive females.

Namibia continues to maintain an active and engaged leadership role in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. In this regard, through the establishment of the International Women's Peace Centre in my country, we have taken on the challenge of further conceptualizing and operationalizing women's influence in peace processes. Through general advocacy for the women and peace and security agenda, networking and partnerships, and through capacity-building and training, the Namibian Government has remained committed to elevating Namibian women to full, equal and meaningful participation in peace processes.

The proliferation of armed groups and small arms and light weapons continues to play a key role in the outbreak and escalation of modern armed conflicts, which now consist largely of internal conflicts and civil wars. In this regard, my delegation would like to reiterate that the need to better integrate considerations concerning small arms and light weapons (SALW) into the women and peace and security agenda remains a priority. We encourage States to consider how to integrate SALW control in their national action plans on women, peace and security. We also call on the Security Council to support the collection of data on small arms and light weapons, disaggregated by age and sex. For the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda to occur, the full and meaningful participation of women in the political, economic and social aspects of States and societies also needs to occur.

The inclusion of women in traditional security institutions alone will not help to ameliorate the gaps

in implementation. A more comprehensive approach that takes security into account alongside the removal of structural inequalities across society is required. For as long as there is inequality based on gender in our societies, and without the full participation of women in society, neither peace nor prosperity can be ensured over the long term. The meaningful participation of women measurably strengthens protection efforts and deepens the effectiveness of peacebuilding.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Ms. Mrad (Lebanon) (*spoke in French*): We congratulate Gabon on its presidency of the Security Council this month, and we thank it for organizing this welcome annual debate. We take this opportunity to also congratulate France for its able presidency of the Council last month. We also thank the briefers for their briefings.

(*spoke in English*)

We meet today at a very critical time for our world. Women's rights around the world have witnessed a clear deterioration, and gender equality seems to be out of reach, with UN-Women affirming that at the current rate of progress, it may take close to 300 years to achieve full gender equality. We cannot wait 300 years. Achieving gender equality, strengthening women's resilience and leadership and ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of all women, are all needed today more than ever.

Lebanon has kept the women and peace and security agenda front and centre. We have made progress in implementing our first national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), and we are currently working on developing our second plan. During its visit to Lebanon in June 2022, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security was able to witness how we are implementing our action plan. We once again thank the Group and its Chairs, Ireland and Mexico, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration.

This year, Lebanon has made a breakthrough in enhancing women's participation in the defence sector. For the first time ever, in 2022, approximately 50 per cent of the graduating Lebanese army cadets were women, with the top three graduates of the class being women. Moreover, and while we still have a long way to go, there was

“some momentum for increased participation of women in public life”,

as described by the Secretary-General in his report on women and peace and security (S/2022/740, para. 51). In fact, we witnessed a record number of women candidates during our most recent parliamentary elections. We strongly believe that when women are part of the solution, the solution is more effective, more durable and more sustainable. When women are empowered, everyone benefits, as Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said earlier today.

It is of utmost importance to strengthen women's participation and leadership in United Nations peacekeeping missions. For Lebanon, women peacekeepers in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) play an important role, even if their number is still very low. We salute UNIFIL for becoming the first United Nations peacekeeping mission to provide gender-sensitive housing and invest in better working conditions for women peacekeepers, thereby tackling challenges that impede women peacekeepers' full, equal and meaningful participation in peacekeeping. We hope that this step will, as the Secretary-General mentions in his report,

“incentivize[e] troop-contributing countries to deploy more women”, (S/2022/740, para. 85).

While the world is still years away from achieving real gender equality, the women and peace and security agenda is put forward as a guiding tool to strengthen women's participation and leadership. As the Secretary-General puts it,

“[t]he women and peace and security agenda is not just an answer to historic wrongs and marginalization, but an opportunity to do things differently” (*ibid.*, para. 7).

We must start doing things differently, we must do more, and we must do it now.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mrs. Al-halique (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to congratulate Gabon on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and to thank it for convening this debate on women and peace and security and the topic “Strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed

groups”. I would also like to thank the briefers for their valuable contributions.

Believing in the prominent role played by Jordanian women in the development process in general, and in enhancing means of security, peace and protection in particular, Jordan drafted its national plan 2018-2021 to operationalize resolution 1325 (2000). We began the implementation of the plan through the security sector, Government institutions and civil society organizations. A communication strategy related to the resolution was prepared and launched after consultations with all partners in the national plan to meet the needs of the Jordanian society. Jordan is currently preparing our second national plan to further operationalize resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

Jordan is eager to take the resolution's strategic objectives into consideration when implementing its national plan to address gender issues, including the active participation of women in the security, military and peacebuilding sectors; ensuring the active participation of women in preventing extremism and violence; achieving national and regional peacebuilding; guaranteeing the availability of humanitarian services to respond to gender needs, including psychological, social, legal and medical services; facilitating safe access to such services, especially for Jordanian women and girls, as well as female refugees, who are the most vulnerable to violence and the most in need of protection in host communities and refugee camps in Jordan; and, finally, promoting a culture that acknowledges gender needs, the importance of gender equality and the role of women, including young women, in achieving peace and security.

I would like now to review the best examples of Jordan's support to women's leadership in striving for peace, and the most prominent recorded figures related to the first strategic objective of resolution 1325 (2000), namely, the increase in the percentage of women working in the security and military sectors. The percentage of female recruits in the Jordanian army increased from 6.8 per cent in 2017 to 9.6 per cent in 2021. In the general security and police forces, the number of female recruits increased from 4.77 per cent to 6.2 per cent over the same period. Similarly, the percentage of women in leadership positions increased from 0.2 per cent in 2017 to 1.64 per cent in 2021.

The participation of women in peacekeeping missions also increased after Jordanian women were

among the first to join United Nations peacekeeping missions in 2007. To date, 146 women have participated in peacekeeping missions in the Congo, Cyprus, South Sudan and Fiji, where they served refugees and participated in training local police forces.

The Jordanian armed forces also seek to ensure that women play a more effective role by participating in new areas, such as in international peacekeeping forces and special and humanitarian missions. Female personnel of the Royal Medical Services have participated in several external missions, such as to hospitals in Liberia and the Congo.

To demonstrate some of the ways in which women's resilience can be supported, Jordan believes that national action plans are the best way to translate the women and peace and security agenda into action on the ground, based on each country's specific circumstances. We also believe that the best way to ensure that the commitments of resolution 1325 (2000) are fulfilled is to provide the necessary funding and to establish a normative framework that includes accountability for the implementation of the agenda in an objective and meaningful manner.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give floor to the representative of Germany.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): On behalf of the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network, which is co-chaired by South Africa and Germany, we congratulate Gabon on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and for convening the annual open debate on women and peace and security, with a focus on strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups. We also thank the briefers for their insightful briefings.

We are currently faced with a worrisome multitude of overlapping crises — worsening global climate change, the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic and a record number of violent armed conflicts — as well as the ensuing food and energy crises, which all undermine development in Africa and other parts of the world and put at risk the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Because of structural discrimination, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the negative effects of those crises. However, as we keep saying, women are far more than passive victims and survivors.

We must not only shine a light on the plight of women but also amplify their role as agents of change who make constructive and essential contributions to the common good and to more stable, peaceful and just societies.

The African Women Leaders Network, as an Africa-wide movement for women's dynamic engagement and participation in decision-making at all levels of society, is a prime example of female self-organization and agency. It demonstrates once more that women can mobilize, demand actions and achieve great results when structural barriers are addressed and overcome, especially in domains from which they have been excluded for generations. It is an example of women's leadership in multilateralism and of working together to prevent conflict and promote inclusive peace and sustainable development.

Established in 2017 in collaboration with the African Union (AU) and the United Nations and with the support of Germany, the Network comprises women from all sectors — civil society and grass-roots organizations as well as the political, public and private sectors. The Network has to date established 30 national chapters, made up of women leaders and professionals from various fields, backgrounds and generations.

As a unique global platform for advocacy and influence that uses its experience to serve as a key agent for women and peace and security in Africa and as a women-led intermediary between the AU and the United Nations system, the Network's advocacy aims to ensure that women's leadership is a regular agenda item at AU and United Nations gatherings.

We are also proud to announce that the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network, which was established in New York in 2018, has supported the Network's dynamic development and its efforts to advance African women peacebuilders from the perspective of the United Nations, and will continue to work alongside all stakeholders in raising the voices of women in dire situations in regions plagued by armed groups.

As mentioned in the concept note prepared by the delegation of Gabon for today's meeting (see S/2022/743), the Security Council is aware of the important role that women's organizations play in conflict-affected countries as they strive to meet the needs of local communities. Yet only 0.3 per cent of bilateral aid in conflict-affected countries goes to women's organizations, which suffer from a constant

lack of funding and are hampered in their agency and potential. We are therefore leaving out potentially some of the most important actors in the management and resolution of conflicts and crises. That needs to change. We urge the members of the Council to continue to expand the space for more civil society organization briefers and to adopt a more inclusive approach to finding lasting solutions to the menaces to women's well-being in conflict situations.

Violence against women and girls, especially in times of conflict, is rampant. We must not rest until real change has been achieved in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Negative social norms and cultural misconceptions are never reasons for violence against women and girls.

Against that backdrop, we applaud the upcoming second Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity, on the theme "Advancing actions and promoting positive masculinity to end violence against women and girls", which will be convened by President Macky Sall of Senegal, 2022 Chairperson of the AU, in collaboration with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa and Ghana, as well as the AU and African Women Leaders Network Patron Her Excellency Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and will be held on 10 November in Dakar.

Ensuring meaningful participation and equal rights, with full resources for women and girls, is key to securing peace, stability and prosperity for all. We need to transform gender roles and power relations by breaking the barriers to women's meaningful participation at all levels of peace processes and in leadership and decision-making spheres. That is necessary for ensuring women's financial and economic inclusion, which the African Union has set as its goal for this decade.

Countless studies have shown that empowering women economically and politically leads to sustainable growth, stability and more resilience for society as a whole. That makes countries better prepared to respond effectively to crises. The same is true of peace and security. Peace agreements are more likely to last when women participate meaningfully.

The Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network will continue to support the women and peace and security agenda and the instrumental role of African women's agency in achieving greater equity,

fairness and stability, more inclusive governance and effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

With your permission, Madam President, I shall immediately start my national statement. I have shortened it in the interest of time, and I apologize to the interpreters as they have another version.

While we value the normative achievements of the women and peace and security agenda, with its 10 Security Council resolutions, we must acknowledge that women's participation often remains minimal in peace processes, humanitarian action and strategic decision-making at all levels. What is more, we often see how women and peace and security and gender equality commitments are deprioritized during conflicts, despite abundant evidence that gender equality offers a path to sustainable peace and conflict prevention.

Germany is very concerned about the large-scale pushback against the gains in women's rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/740), it is also very important to look at the multitude of interlocking crises in relation to the women and peace and security agenda.

A current issue of particular concern to Germany is the ongoing crackdown on women's rights in Iran. We must reverse all those trends and take full advantage of the potential that lies in greater participation of all genders and marginalized groups. That is why Germany remains a committed supporter of the women and peace and security agenda.

We will continue to support women peacebuilders, peacekeepers and women-led organizations. They are the ones that work day by day towards equal justice and peaceful societies, often putting themselves in danger in their pursuits. We need to listen to, support and protect them. For instance, Germany will continue supporting the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. We were its largest donor last year. We will also continue to support the growth of regional networks, where women civil society activists and leaders come together in safe spaces.

Germany will continue to support the African Women Leaders Network and the Unidas Women's Network, which connects women from Latin America and the Caribbean and Germany. Germany has also initiated the Action Network on Forced Displacement — Women as Agents of Change, with

the aim of supporting women in displacement contexts. We will continue to fight for equal rights in letter and spirit, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and equal resources for women and girls in all their diversity and in marginalized communities. That is why Germany has committed to feminist foreign and development policies as an indispensable foundation for securing peace, stability and prosperity for all.

The Security Council's women and peace and security agenda remains a priority for Germany in the United Nations, and it can count on Germany's unwavering support in putting it into action.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia): We commend Gabon for organizing today's debate on women and peace and security. Slovenia aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union, the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

We welcome the Secretary-General's annual report (S/2022/740) and its presentation. Together with other accessible information, the findings in the report point to significant setbacks in the global situation of women in recent years. Since 2019 the number of women and girls living in fragile or conflict-affected countries has doubled, while at the same time military expenditures have risen to an all-time high. Appallingly, rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict have increased, and we know that 98 per cent of survivors of those attacks are women and girls. The gender gap in food security between men and women has grown eightfold since 2018, while in the same period global spending on education has stagnated. On average, in lower-income and lower-middle-income countries it has decreased by 13 per cent. We know that girls will endure the worst of those negative trends.

Another deeply worrisome trend pointed out in the Secretary-General's report is that of the increase in mutually reinforcing misogyny and authoritarianism. The lesson we have learned from recurring conflicts is that efforts to achieve peace and stability will fail in the long term if they are not fully inclusive. The full, equal and meaningful participation of women is therefore key to addressing lasting peace, stability and sustainable development. We urgently need decisive steps to be taken if we are to realize the women and peace and security agenda.

During the 30 years of Slovenia's statehood, women have achieved important milestones as political leaders. The current President of our National Assembly is a woman. We have had a woman Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Interior Minister, and for the first time we have a female Minister for Foreign Affairs. Women have already served as Chief of the General Staff of the Slovenian Army and as Director General of our police. Those achievements are a result of a long-standing national commitment to the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in our society, and they have also helped to make Slovenia the seventh most peaceful country in the world according to the Global Peace Index of 2022.

Women's empowerment is a long-standing foreign policy priority for Slovenia. Our Peace Operations Training Centre conducts trainings in gender equality and mainstreaming in international missions and operations. From training Venezuelan women in negotiations, mediation and conflict resolution to holding beekeeping workshops for Afghan refugee girls in Iran, and from enabling the work of female doctors in Afghanistan to providing assistance and medical care for Syrian refugee women and girls in Lebanon, our development and humanitarian projects contain strong cross-cutting elements for women's empowerment. We will raise the share of our development cooperation for gender equality from the current 39 per cent to 60 per cent by the end of the decade.

Since we live in a time when no place on Earth is out of reach of technology, how can it be that we have no clear picture of the extent of attacks on women human rights defenders? Peace operations reporting should consistently contain disaggregated data on attacks on human rights defenders. In conflict, post-conflict and transitional environments, where women already bear a disproportionate burden of deprivation and are also a target of armed groups, organized crime and terrorist groups, women's organizations need assistance if they are to provide support. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's call to all who lead peace operations and their country teams for annual updates on measures contributing to a safe and enabling environment for women's organizations and women's human rights defenders.

In conclusion, Slovenia is strongly committed to continuing to provide robust support to women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Ms. Baptista Grade Zacarias (Portugal): We thank Gabon for convening this debate, as well as the briefers for their presentations and their commitment.

Portugal aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Our thoughts today are with all women and girls who are victims of the violence inflicted by armed groups — in Ukraine, the Sahel, Afghanistan, Syria and all other conflict situations around the world.

Earlier this week, in Lisbon, we held a ceremony for the North-South Prize of the Council of Europe. That award recognizes individuals or institutions distinguishing themselves in the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. One of its laureates was Zarifa Ghafari. She was the youngest person ever to become a mayor in Afghanistan, and one of the few women ever to have assumed such a position. Her example of courage and commitment in defending the principle that women's rights are human rights should inspire us, especially in the context of a country where women are now not even allowed to leave their homes without male supervision and where girls have been banned from secondary schools.

More than 20 years have gone by since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000). Since then, our international framework has been made more robust, with nine other important Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security. However, we are witnessing a global backlash against gender equality, restricting women and girls' full and equal enjoyment of all human rights. The Secretary-General rightly notes in his report (S/2022/740) that we are experiencing a reversal of generational gains in women's rights and that it is up to us and to the Council to reverse that reversal. We must redouble our efforts to fight sexual and gender-based violence, put an end to human trafficking, protect migrant women and ensure women's human rights to education and health. That intersectional and multilevel lens is needed in the women and peace and security agenda. The Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, launched at the Generation Equality Forum in 2021, has strengthened the means at our disposal for acting on the triple nexus between peace, development and human rights. In Portugal, too, we are currently preparing our third national plan

on women and peace and security and also our 2030 Development Cooperation Strategy, with the aim of fostering synergies between the two plans in line with the triple nexus.

Protecting women against sexual violence and protecting the rights of women in situations of conflict all around the world are collective responsibilities. We therefore encourage collective action and the building of bridges with institutions such as UN-Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as with civil-society organizations. The work at the local level remains essential to build resilience. We need to focus on preventive diplomacy and mediation. We need to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation at every stage of peace processes. And we need to put an end to intimidation and reprisals against women peacebuilders. The right of women human rights defenders to participate in peace processes is non-negotiable. Any form of reprisal, harassment or arbitrary detention must be met with a response, and above all, accountability must be ensured.

Portugal remains fully committed to the women and peace and security agenda, and you can count on our support, Madam President.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I congratulate Gabon on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month, and I thank the President for organizing this open debate.

Women have an undeniable capacity to contribute to processes of peace and security. On the other hand, they are also the most at risk, especially in times of conflict, and they are frequently the victims of violence and discrimination in areas that are directly affected by terrorist and armed groups. Preventing and resolving armed conflicts are equally important. To achieve this, we must first address their underlying causes. The international community, and in particular the Security Council, should keep up its efforts aimed at resolving conflicts through peaceful means and find political solutions to conflict hotspots through dialogue, diplomacy and mediation. At every stage of the peace process, it is advantageous to include women as they are a vital component of society.

Since its establishment, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always considered the promotion of the cultural, social, economic and political status of women as a key element in its policymaking, legislation and national planning. As a result, Iranian women have the right to fully participate in opportunities for advancement.

Education is just one example of the opportunities critical for women's empowerment. Women and girls account for more than half of all university students, and currently 73 per cent of medical professionals and 49 per cent of doctors in Iran are female. Such significant progress has also provided the Government with the ability to appoint women to management positions and work to improve female employees' managerial skills and executive expertise, thus increasing women's participation in decision-making. This figure has risen from 13 per cent in 2017 to over 25 per cent in 2021. Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran has created an environment in which Iranian women can proudly represent their nation's religious and patriotic beliefs at the international level in all fields, including science, sports and the arts. My country is on the rise in these fields, as shown by statistics.

Given the unintended and disastrous consequences for Iranian women's rights of the inhumane unilateral coercive measures by the United States, as well as its violation of their basic rights, the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, should not shirk its responsibility and speak out against these illegal and cruel measures.

In conclusion, I would like to respond to certain Western countries that have misused this forum to make unfounded allegations against my country while claiming to support the rights of Iranian women. We denounce these allegations, which are nothing more than an attempt to politicize women's rights. We see no good faith or genuineness in these States' claims to support Iranian women, given their hypocrisy, double standards and selective application of human rights.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights of all, including women and girls. We believe that no country can claim to be perfect when it comes to human rights or the rights of women and girls, and Iran, like other countries, strives to improve human rights, including the rights of women and girls.

The tragic death of Mahsa Amini, a young Iranian girl, has broken the hearts not only of the individuals

who form our Government but also of the people of my country. We regret the incident and hope never to have to witness such a heartbreaking loss again. A thorough investigation was carried out to determine the circumstances that led to this tragic death. So far, the findings of two preliminary investigations have been shared with Member States and organizations affiliated with the United Nations.

Iranian women are smart, well-educated, dedicated and patriotic. And they are aware of their rights. They also understand how to engage with the Government in a peaceful and constructive manner to advance their rights. We therefore advise those Western States that they are not required to act as guardians or caretakers of Iranian women or speak on their behalf.

On numerous occasions, including recently, we have heard claims from Western States that they are defending the United Nations Charter and international law. We urge those States to keep their promises, uphold their international obligations under the United Nations Charter, and respect the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other sovereign States, which are the cornerstones of the United Nations and the international legal order.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica thanks Gabon for convening today's open debate and the briefers for their briefings. In both conflict and post-conflict situations, resilience and recovery depend on hidden, unpaid and domestic work that is largely performed by women. In this regard, Costa Rica wishes to highlight three aspects.

First, although the resolutions on women, peace and security do not explicitly mention widows or widowhood, 50 per cent of the female population in post-conflict contexts are widows. Often impoverished, widows and their children have been recruited by armed and extremist groups in the hope of finding physical and economic security there. In 2017, the United Nations Development Programme estimated that more than 30 per cent of recruited children come from families with a widowed or single female head of household.

More than two decades and 10 resolutions later, we have not sufficiently explored the role of the private sector in advancing the women, peace and security agenda. Public-private partnerships can promote the

post-conflict recovery of local communities, especially by hiring and supporting widows, and they can even encourage their political participation. However, although current efforts have been scattered, we see the potential and urgently need to maximize it.

Secondly, there is an urgent need to expand existing funding mechanisms for women human rights defenders and for new funding streams to be created to deliver resources to civil society organizations led by women or members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities that are working in conflict-affected areas. We welcome the development of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund for Women Human Rights Defenders, which aims to provide rapid and flexible resources to women-led civil society organizations.

Thirdly, Costa Rica calls for the strengthening and expansion of response mechanisms to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, end impunity for perpetrators and provide comprehensive support to survivors. The Security Council and all United Nations bodies, including the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, must recognize crimes of gender-based persecution, including sexual violence and other forms of persecution perpetrated on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, physical characteristics and self-expression. We must also leverage the presence of United Nations agencies in humanitarian settings to expand access to justice for survivors of sexual violence at the community and State levels.

We have seen organizations led by young women emerge in post-conflict situations in many parts of the world. Their goal is to place women under the age of 35 at the centre of resilience and peacebuilding efforts. Young women are the missing piece in the peacebuilding puzzle. It is time to integrate them into our peace, development and security efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of New Zealand. New Zealand aligns itself with the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security statement delivered by the representative of Canada.

New Zealand thanks Gabon for choosing to focus on women's resilience and leadership in conflict

settings. Without a doubt, the role of women's leadership and resilience is a pivotal issue in finding a path out of conflict in many regions around the world. In Yemen, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Myanmar, Syria, Haiti and many other fragile settings, women and girls are leading crucial efforts towards building peace and conflict resolution. They have demonstrated harrowing determination, leadership and resilience amid dangerous contexts where their basic right to life is threatened on a daily basis.

Resolution 1325 (2000) represents a significant step forward; nonetheless, we have a long way to go in ensuring the participation of women and incorporating gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. This year's Secretary-General report (S/2022/740) shows the persistent implementation gaps to which we must pay attention. The report also highlights how the combined impacts of the coronavirus disease pandemic, climate and conflict presented greater challenges for women and peace and security. It is now more crucial than ever that we not only recover lost ground, but also redouble efforts to tackle those pressing challenges.

Based on our own experience, New Zealand recommends the following three initiatives for strengthening women's leadership and resilience in conflict settings.

First, it is crucial that we, as Member States, insist on women's meaningful participation in all peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts and make that a centrepiece for the new agenda for peace. We strongly support the call for all United Nations-supported peace processes to require and ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership at all stages and levels of United Nations-led peace processes. That means taking concrete measure to address long-standing barriers to women's leadership and redoubling our efforts to build resilience. For New Zealand's part, our Wahine Toa Leadership Programme is designed to increase women's leadership and participation in defence, including in peacekeeping operation and peace processes.

Secondly, New Zealand has seen first-hand the immense value of women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society representatives. That has rung true in our experience supporting peace efforts in the South Pacific, including in Solomon Islands. Within New Zealand's membership

of the Peacebuilding Commission and support for the Peacebuilding Fund, we are committed to advancing the Organization's peacebuilding gender strategy to ensure gender-responsive engagement in all aspects of the Organization's peacebuilding work. Inclusion is fundamental to sustainable peace, and we will seek to ground our engagement in gender-responsive peacebuilding and bringing women's diverse perspectives to the fore.

Thirdly, listening to the female civil society briefers today, it is clear that their voices and the diverse voices of female civil society are indispensable to advancing women's involvement in peace processes. We urge all Member States to prioritize the creation of safe and enabling environments for all women peacebuilders, women human rights defenders and women civil society leaders. It is high time we ensured our actions match our words when it comes to women's leadership and participation in conflict-resolution efforts. We will continue to do our utmost in pursuing that end.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mrs. Narváez Ojeda (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the presidency of Gabon for convening today's debate. I also thank the speakers for their important contribution to this debate.

Chile aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

In 2021, the United Nations verified almost 3,300 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, 800 more than the previous year. In addition, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in conflict situations increased by 20 per cent in 2021, and 98 per cent of the survivors were girls. How do we explain the gradual detriment each year of the situation of women and girls in conflict, while we have at our disposal the Rome Statute, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the women and peace and security agenda and the various provisions of international humanitarian law? We can do more, as an international community, to ensure that those frameworks interact and complement each other, fully prioritizing their implementation.

Furthermore, the fact that female representation in conflict-resolution processes stood at 19 per cent, as compared to 23 per cent in 2020, reminds us that

the quality of a peace agreement is demonstrated in its implementation and its potential to produce positive effects on people's daily lives. Chile promotes structural approaches where the full and meaningful participation of all women at all levels of decision-making is guaranteed.

We will also not succeed in paving the road to long-term peace if measures are not adopted to not only prevent and condemn sexual and gender-based violence, in particular harmful practices and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, but to guarantee access to justice for survivors while ensuring accountability for perpetrators.

In particular, I would like to refer to three transformative elements — women's economic empowerment, the collection and analysis of disaggregated data and the importance of access to education.

Everyone has the right to an education without fear of violence or attack. Education also plays a unique role in preventing violence and empowering children and youth to succeed and be agents of change despite their complex circumstances.

Moreover, good practices of inclusion have shown that conflict-affected women and girls have gained gradual economic security and autonomy through increased access to, and control over, resources, the promotion of specific skills and the generation of the employment and education opportunities they need. We recognize the gaps in funding and data collection in order to be able to promote the approaches described above. We invite the international community, within the framework of the current situation and in line with the commitments to reduce military spending, to better channel resources to education and social protection systems.

Chile reiterates its commitment to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and its nine subsequent resolutions in hopes that as an international community we will be able to respond to the challenges.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Ms. Jiménez de la Hoz (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU) and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, of which it is a member.

We thank the Gabonese presidency for organizing this debate, which is particularly relevant at a time when, as the Secretary-General's latest report on women and peace and security (S/2022/740) indicates, the world is, unfortunately, facing a setback in the generational gains of certain women's rights, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations, with an increase of sexual violence in conflict, but also in the face of the rise of authoritarianism and violent extremism. In countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Colombia, Yemen and Ukraine, women human rights defenders, journalists and activists risk their lives every day to promote women's rights and their role in peacebuilding and political participation.

The women and peace and security agenda is part of Spain's foreign policy priorities. In 2007, we approved our first national action plan for women, peace and security — becoming one of the first three countries in the world to do so. We are also one of the nine countries that the Secretary-General's latest report identifies as having developed a feminist foreign policy, with the aim of incorporating the gender perspective into all areas of foreign affairs. Since 2017, Spain has participated in more than 26 bilateral political dialogues, consultations and visits to conflict and post-conflict countries. We also provide technical and financial support for the promotion of the national action plans on women and peace and security in countries such as Colombia, Jordan, Mali and Chad.

In the context of regional organizations, since 2020, we have been promoting the women and peace and security programme of the Economic Community of West African States and the Group of Five for the Sahel Women's Platform through a memorandum of understanding and our technical and financial support.

In the context of the United Nations, we have also demonstrated our constructive commitment to the women and peace and security agenda, including in the Security Council, when in 2015, as a Council member, together with the United Kingdom, we sponsored resolution 2242 (2015) and the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. Spain also hosted the first meeting of the informal Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network in Alicante in April 2017.

As reflected in the Secretary-General's latest report, mainstreaming the women and peace and security agenda in the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and in the mandates of peace operations has

a genuine impact in improving their performance. For that reason, Spain, together with the Netherlands, hosts the course on a comprehensive approach to gender in operations, which is held four times a year. My country is also currently leading the gender training programme for European Union (EU) missions as the EU Gender Military Training Discipline Leader.

If we want to further strengthen women's resilience and leadership, the United Nations and the political support of regional actors, such as the European Union, are essential. It is also crucial to strengthen relations with civil society and facilitate a suitable environment for women's organizations and human rights defenders and activists to carry out their work with full security assurances. For Spain's part, we will continue to finance mechanisms, instruments and funds that promote the women and peace and security agenda. We will continue to support the Commitment 2025 initiative, launched with Finland in 2018 and involving countries from several continents, to promote the meaningful participation of women in peace and mediation processes.

I would like to conclude my statement by mentioning two specific situations, in Afghanistan and Ukraine.

I would like to emphasize Spain's strong commitment to protecting the rights of Afghan women and girls, including their full, equal and meaningful participation in institutions and the strengthening of their political leadership. To that end, in Madrid in February this year, we launched the Hear Us initiative, which enables Afghan women in exile to speak out against rights violations in Afghanistan and influence the humanitarian, development and security agenda in the country.

In Ukraine, where the unjustified Russian military aggression is approaching its eighth month, we are deeply concerned about the increasing evidence of sexual and gender-based violence against Ukrainian women, some of them minors.

Spain will continue to work with international partners to prevent abuses against displaced persons, particularly women and children. We will support all efforts to fight against impunity and ensure accountability in all cases of sexual and gender-based violence, for which it is essential to strengthen data-collection and investigation capacities, as recommended in the latest report of the Secretary-General.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Fellin.

Ms. Fellin (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Gabon for having convened today's open debate.

(*spoke in English*)

Twenty-two years ago, the Security Council made clear its commitment to women and peace and security and set the baseline for the nexus between women and security. While anniversaries are normally a time of celebration, today I address the Council with sadness. I address it at a time when women's rights are being challenged and when women need to stand up against too often violent pushback, such as in Iran and Afghanistan. We are also in a time of widespread conflict with disastrous effects on people — our people, women, men, girls and boys, young and old — in far too many countries, such as Myanmar, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Palestine and Ukraine.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has shattered peace in Europe and has shaken the international order. We have witnessed indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure and the use of conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war. That is contrary to international law. However, the Ukrainian population, including women, remain resilient in the face of displacement, killings, torture, forced deportations and rape. Those horrific war crimes have an impact on all people — women, men, girls and boys. But we know the extent of the disproportionate impact on women and girls.

We at NATO recognize the fundamental importance of advancing the women and peace and security agenda. Our founders recognized the importance of rooting peace in our enduring values — freedom, democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and respect for the obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and human rights.

Now, for the first time, our new Strategic Concept, adopted in Madrid in June, explicitly recognizes women and peace and security and gender equality as integral to NATO's values and what we do. That is an important milestone. Indeed, NATO has long recognized the important role that women play in achieving peace and ensuring our security. Since 2007, our policies and action plans on women and peace and security have continued to reflect an ever-deeper understanding of how applying a gender perspective enhances our work

and strengthens our mission. When we think of human security, we also think of gender perspectives. Those two agendas complement and reinforce each other.

When the Alliance first started implementing resolution 1325 (2000), our original focus was limited to operations. Today women and peace and security is integrated across all core tasks. We have come a long way, but there is still a long way to go.

As we look towards the future, we are working to integrate gender perspectives into our work on emerging challenges, such as climate change, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and emerging disruptive technology. We are also exploring the synergies between the women and peace and security agenda and the global youth and peace and security agenda within the framework of our mandate.

On the occasion of this twenty-second anniversary, I made a personal pledge to push for further change in favour of this agenda, and I invited NATO allied and partner leadership to do the same. Political commitments do not work in isolation. To mean something, there needs to be accountability and leadership. Each of us here has a responsibility, and it is time to move from principles to practice.

Anniversaries are a great opportunity to remind ourselves of what we have done and to look forward. We must remain active to safeguard what was achieved. We must push to protect against continuing and new violations. We need to promote the increased participation of women at all levels — in politics, diplomacy, mediation and peacebuilding. We need to link up with our youth for the future. We need our leaders to lead by example.

As a country, a NATO partner, a people and individuals, Ukraine is an example of resilience, standing up for values shared by most. Resilience is based on believing in, and feeling and acting on, our enduring values. Resilience brings us together, and it is through resilience that we will push the women and peace and security forward.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Rizal (Malaysia): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to you, Madam President, for convening today's important open debate on women and peace and security, with a focus on strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in

regions plagued by armed groups. Malaysia would also like to thank the briefers for their statements.

Malaysia is concerned about the reports of a global surge in negative trends concerning the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We note with concern the decrease in commitment to gender equality, as well as the rise in violence and attacks against women human rights defenders, including journalists, in many parts of the world. More must clearly be done to dismantle the structures that support and promote barriers to building sustained peace and security. In that regard, we must revitalize efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda by giving greater attention to ensuring better protection for women peace advocates, including through political, financial and capacity-building support.

Malaysia remains convinced that women's participation is key to the success and longevity of peace processes. We are committed to building capacity and advancing the women and peace and security agenda at the national, regional and international levels. We continue to support UN-Women, including through contributions, in enhancing women's meaningful participation and the integration of gender perspectives in peace and security actions.

Malaysia is fully committed to supporting the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), including by increasing the number of civilians and uniformed women personnel in peacekeeping missions at all levels and in key positions. Currently, 849 Malaysian peacekeepers serve in five United Nations peacekeeping operations, 85 of whom are women peacekeepers deployed in Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Western Sahara. We are also preparing a national action plan on women and peace and security.

At the regional level along with our fellow Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, Malaysia will continue to apply a gender lens to our collective efforts to integrate women and peace and security in South-East Asia. Several milestones have been achieved, including through the establishment of the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry and the Expanded Advisory Group on Women, Peace and Security, as well as the participation of ASEAN women military and law enforcement officers in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We look forward to the planned adoption by ASEAN leaders of the

Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security at the fortieth ASEAN Summit, to be held next month.

Malaysia believes that ASEAN has a lot to offer in strengthening women's leadership and resilience in peace and security activities. We believe it is important to share with others our mediation, disaster-management and capacity-building experiences, among other things, while also learning from others as we strive to break the barriers in realizing the women and peace and security agenda.

No one should bear the brunt of war and conflict. We must make greater collective efforts to encourage dialogue, constructive engagement and peaceful resolution in order to prevent conflict and war. In the meantime, we must do more to improve gender equality in peace processes. We must create an environment that is conducive to enabling women peacekeepers and peacebuilders to take on their rightful place and roles in building lasting peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Tammsaar (Estonia): First of all, I would like to commend Gabon for convening today's timely and very important open debate on women and peace and security.

Estonia aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, and I would like to make a few observations in my national capacity.

Estonia welcomes the Security Council's annual open debate on women and peace and security and remains committed to standing firm in advancing women's rights, security and leadership, as we did during our elected membership of the Security Council in 2020 and 2021.

In February, Ukrainians woke up to shelling by the Russian army, which initiated an imperial conquest attempt similar to the grim practices of past centuries. As a result, more than 12 million people, mostly women and children, have been forced to flee their homes. In addition to their massive death toll, women and girls have been subjected to rape, deportation, exploitation and abuse. In the face of those continuous horrors, Ukrainian women have demonstrated incredible resolve by taking leading roles in the political, military and humanitarian spheres in order to resist the Russian aggression.

Unfortunately, there are numerous other examples. In Afghanistan, women and girls are still deprived of education, jobs and political and social rights. In Ethiopia, women and girls have faced mass displacement. In Iran, women are fighting for their rights, at the cost of their own lives, and they deserve our respect and support.

As our focus today is on women's resilience and leadership, Estonia affirms its efforts to further advance the role of women. We will continue to support UN-Women, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and the Offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in their activities.

To conclude, women are so often a decisive driving force of change, yet they also pay the heaviest price in times of conflict. We at the United Nations must work together to empower women and ensure their fair participation in building societies that are resilient, inclusive and peaceful. That is a sacred commitment we can make for future generations of women and girls.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Latvia.

Mr. Pildegovičs (Latvia): I would like to start by thanking Gabon for initiating today's open debate, as well as all the briefers for their testimonies.

Latvia welcomes the continued practice of inviting women civil-society representatives to brief the Security Council. Latvia also welcomes the report of the Secretary General (S/2022/740) and the recommendations it contains.

Latvia aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security concerning the situations in the Sudan, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen and other fragile and conflict-affected countries. Allow me to focus my statement today mostly on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

This month, we mark the twenty-second anniversary of the adoption of the women and peace and security agenda in resolution 1325 (2000), a landmark resolution that recognized importance of women's leadership in achieving international peace and security, as well as their contribution to conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping,

peacebuilding and humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction.

In that resolution and the nine other resolutions adopted over the following two decades, the Council also recognized the suffering that armed conflict brings to women and girls and declared sexual violence a war crime. The Council called on parties to respect international law and take measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence.

Nevertheless, a member of this very Council, the Russian Federation, instead of working to alleviate adversities and hardships in the conflict-ridden world, chose to cause misery and commit crimes. Women and girls are experiencing immense suffering, including sexual violence, because of the unprovoked, unjustified war that the Russian Federation chose to wage against its neighbouring country Ukraine. The Russian Federation must and will be held accountable for the crimes it has committed, including through a special tribunal for crimes of aggression.

Latvia firmly supports the women and peace and security agenda, since ensuring women's rights and peace is a priority for us as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as the UN-Women Executive Board starting next January. Latvia respects international law and works in accordance with the resolutions of the Council to help women and girls affected by armed conflict.

Beginning on the very first days of Russia's war against Ukraine, Latvia rapidly allocated additional funds to providing physical and emotional rehabilitation to victims of the war, especially women and girls, who have suffered from sexual violence committed by Russian soldiers, as documented by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. Latvia has welcomed more than 35,000 Ukrainian refugees. Latvia is ensuring that the human rights of the survivors of sexual violence are at the heart of its response. We follow standards for the safe and effective documentation to record survivors' experiences, respecting their rights to dignity, privacy and health.

As part of its development cooperation, Latvia supports civil society organizations to help women and girls in Ukraine. For example, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, Latvia is supporting the establishment of a rehabilitation centre in Ukraine to help victims of war crimes and will provide support

to Ukraine in the development of its national action plan on women and peace and security. We know that many other countries and organizations are coming together to alleviate the situation. We are thankful for the important work that UN-Women and other United Nations entities are doing to help women and girls in Ukraine.

We commend Ukrainian women for their bravery and resilience in the light of Russia's aggression. We acknowledge the evident truth that women are a force of change. What we need to do is to ensure the meaningful participation of women in all decision-making processes during and after the war, when Ukrainians will rebuild their country. To that end, Latvia is, and always will be, a friend and partner of Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Webster (Australia): Australia thanks Gabon for convening this open debate on women and peace and security, 22 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). The full and effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is of pressing importance, as the global community is confronted with conflicts, crises, climate change and pandemic recovery, intertwined with resurgent misogyny and authoritarianism.

We are again reminded by the Secretary-General in his 2022 annual report (S/2022/740) on women and peace and security that progress is slow and that, in too many instances, it has reversed — with regard to women's participation in peace processes, leadership across contexts and access to justice, undermining human rights and preventing the achievement of gender equality.

Today's topic is not one for debate. The evidence is clear that pathways to peace are paved with women's resilience and leadership. Across the world, women demand to be heard, advocate for the fulfilment of human rights, mediate conflicts and negotiate peace. Where women are absent as a result of force or discriminatory norms and structures, peace does not prevail. Where women human rights defenders are persecuted, peace does not prevail. Where the knowledge and networks of diverse women are disregarded, including in relation to climate, disasters and terrorism, insecurity and instability reign.

Australia is gravely concerned about the growing levels of hostility towards women, particularly women facing intersectional inequalities. The reprisals, intimidation and violence against women peacebuilders, human rights defenders, community activists, protesters, students and educators are abhorrent. We must stand with everyone and every organization fighting for peace and security, grounded in gender justice.

Australia condemned last month's deadly and disproportionate use of force against protesters in Iran and called for truth, justice and the cessation of oppression against women. That is yet another example of why the women and peace and security agenda matters and why we must do more to translate the four pillars from policy to practice. As we step up, we do so in partnership with women and girls, recognizing their resilience and leadership. All women and girls have the right to be fully and equally part of peacekeeping operations, peace negotiations and political processes. And we need the capabilities, insights, strength and transformative leadership of diverse women and girls to attain and sustain peace.

Australia invests in such partnerships by, for example, supporting the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, regional networks of women negotiators and mediators, and gender justice initiatives in the investigation and prosecution of international crimes. Australia is a committed advocate and actor for the women and peace and security agenda, and we appreciate the efforts of so many stakeholders. We welcome collaboration in the implementation of our national action plan and encourage all Member States to adopt, provide resources for and implement the frameworks that will guide us towards peace and security, with inclusion, equity and accountability.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mrs. Tra Phuong Nguyen (Viet Nam): At the outset, allow me to express our appreciation to the Gabonese Republic for convening this open debate and to the briefers for their insightful presentations.

For more than 20 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the meaningful participation of women in peace processes has seen some progress. However, gender inequality, exclusion, discrimination, poverty, violence and conflicts are some of the many issues facing them today.

Despite being vulnerable victims, women are also active agents of change. The first revolution for independence in Viet Nam's history, for example, was led by two women. Be it at war or at peace, Vietnamese women have been playing an indispensable role. Nowadays, we are proud to have Vietnamese women serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Our commitment to the advancement of women is therefore deeply rooted in our long history of women's participation and leadership in the quest for independence and development. Enhancing the participation of women in every sphere of life is a key priority for Viet Nam.

We acknowledge that women and their empowerment are crucial to advancing the culture of peace based on their actual knowledge, wisdom, tolerance and understanding. They play a vital role in educating young people, especially their children, to value peace, not war. That was clearly manifested throughout our membership in the Council. From our own experience, we recognize the important and diverse roles assumed by women in the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in the building of sustainable peace.

In order to effectively implement the women and peace and security agenda, we need to enhance its visibility and share best practices among Member States. The role, leadership and contribution of women should be guaranteed and promoted at the local, national and international levels by mainstreaming their rights, interests and needs within legal frameworks, strategies and policies to ensure their full, equal and meaningful participation.

In United Nations peacekeeping operations, we also need to increase the number of women peacekeepers and ensure their meaningful contributions. In addition, for women's resilience to make a difference, the international community must further support their efforts. Therefore, we echo the call to earmark at least 15 per cent of official development assistance dedicated to advancing gender equality in conflict-affected countries.

In closing, we would like to reiterate our readiness and commitment to join the international community's efforts to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in related processes.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mr. Feruță (Romania): I would like to thank Gabon for convening this important debate. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the briefers.

We fully align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union, and we also subscribe to the statement made on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

I would nevertheless like to add several points in the national context on behalf of Romania.

We are indeed faced with unprecedented challenges to peace and security in Europe. Unfortunately, as a consequence of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, women are severely affected. More than 2.6 million Ukrainian refugees crossed our borders in Romania, mostly women and children, and some of those women returned to defend their country. We are deeply impressed by their courage and sacrifice and applaud their contribution to the national effort to defend their country.

I would also like to extend that appreciation to women everywhere who are faced with situations of violence and armed conflict — in Afghanistan, Mali, Nigeria, Iran and Myanmar, to name just a few. Their courage and resilience are an inspiration and a call to duty for us all.

Romania has a proactive approach to the empowerment of women, both as a human rights objective and as a precondition for social justice, development and peace. We adopted and implemented a national strategy and a national plan of action on women and peace and security, covering the period 2020 to 2023 — the first of their kind at the national level, and both of them build on resolution 1325 (2000).

The national plan of action advances women's participation in the areas of national security and defence, public order and safety and, in a broader sense, in the social and economic realm of the country. Its objectives were established in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000), and we will soon start the inter-institutional process to prepare the second action plan.

I want to stress the importance of the role of women, both uniformed and civilian personnel, in the national defence system, public order and safety in Romania. They make up an important part of Romania's presence in the field missions of international organizations,

including United Nations peacekeeping missions. Some 37.5 per cent of the Romanian military and police personnel in international field missions are women, and they have a vital role in understanding and addressing crisis situations and engaging the most vulnerable groups.

We remain committed to upholding the relevant resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda and, as a newly elected member of the Human Rights Council, to promoting and protecting human rights — a fundamental pillar of our foreign policy.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria.

Mrs. Beshkova (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union, the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

I would also like to share some views in my national capacity.

At the outset, let me thank Gabon for organizing today's open debate on such a relevant topic. Furthermore, I would like to express appreciation for the Secretary-General's most recent report on women and peace and security (S/2022/740), its pertinent recommendations and its sobering warning that the world is experiencing a reversal of generational gains in women's rights and that takes us far away from building stable and prosperous societies.

We see those warnings manifested most clearly in regions plagued by armed groups. Whether those are terrorist groups motivated by religious extremism, mercenaries serving the Russian war machine against Ukraine or ill-trained conscripts, armed groups are usually male and often involved in sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls.

Most recently, we have seen the victimization of women as a result of the ongoing illegal, unprovoked and unjustified aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which has also led to millions of refugees, mostly women and children. Similar tragedies have played out in Africa, the Middle East, Afghanistan and Myanmar, just to name a few.

Women's exclusion from decision-making processes and positions of authority contributes to their victimization. There are two key words — inclusion

and empowerment, including economic empowerment and access to education. Today Bulgaria reconfirms its commitment to protect, respect and promote the human rights of all women and girls and calls upon the international community to mobilize further efforts in that regard and to create a safe framework where women will be able to make their voices heard and hold professional and leadership positions in all spheres of social life, without fear of reprisals or visible or invisible barriers.

The Security Council has a special role in that regard, because of its say over the way in which peacekeeping operations are mandated and conducted. The full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in all spheres of life is crucial if we are to have peaceful, functional and prosperous societies. Ensuring such participation should not be seen as something that comes after peace has been achieved, but should rather be one of the instruments to contain armed groups that are plaguing regions.

Turning now to our national implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, I would like to point out that this year, we are taking stock of our mid-term progress on the implementation of our national action plan on women and peace and security for the period 2020–2025. We call upon all relevant actors to ensure that the values of the women and peace and security agenda are reflected in their national measures to ensure women's inclusion and empowerment and that in peacebuilding settings, they form a substantial part of their national peacebuilding priorities.

Let me conclude by clearly stating the position of my country — making commitments just sets the direction of travel and imagines our societies few years or even few decades ahead. Stepping up for those commitments is already transforming our societies. Stepping back from those commitments, as, regrettably, we have witnessed in many areas of the globe, is equivalent to ruining individual lives and societies with bullets.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of the European Union.

I would like to start by thanking you, Madam President, for organizing today's important debate on women and peace and security, with a focus on

strengthening women's resilience and leadership. We consider it important to increase our joint efforts to ensure gender equality as a path to sustainable peace, although current challenges indicate that we are unfortunately moving in the opposite direction. It is therefore crucial that the Security Council continue to address various aspects of conflicts within the framework of these thematic debates. Today's debate also contributes to a systematic advancement of the women and peace and security agenda in the work and decision-making of the Security Council.

I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women for their insightful briefings earlier today.

Slovakia reiterates its appreciation for resolution 2594 (2021) on United Nations peacekeeping mission transitions, which was unanimously adopted in September 2021, which underlines the need to include engagement with the local community and civil society, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Slovakia considers prevention to be the cornerstone of all United Nations efforts aimed at peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The women and peace and security agenda, together with the goals of inclusivity and gender equality, definitely fits into the broader prevention agenda promoted by the Secretary-General. It is also instrumental to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDGs 5 and 16, which recognize gender equality, as well as peace, justice and strong institutions as global development priorities.

As a co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, Slovakia would like to point to resolution 2151 (2014), on security-sector reform, which underscores the importance of women's equal, meaningful and effective participation and full involvement in the security sector in order to build inclusive, accountable and legitimate institutions that protect populations more efficiently and promote lasting peace and sustainable development. Gender-sensitive security-sector reform is key to developing security-sector institutions that are non-discriminatory, representative of the population and capable of responding effectively to the specific security needs of diverse groups, thereby playing a crucial role in prevention. That is also a governance issue that should be highlighted in that particular context.

Advocating for women leaders in conflict is crucial to adequately addressing the complexity and diversity of crises and the peace and security agenda in general. In that regard, Slovakia continues in its effort to increase the number of women deployed to missions such as the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, in which we have proudly served and played a key role for many years. Women now make up 13 per cent of deployed personnel in that mission, which is more than the target of 9 per cent set for 2022. Of course, we realize that this is not merely a statistical exercise. We are also looking at the structural issues related to the deployment of capable and experienced women.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2022/740) and commend his commitment and leadership, and not just in relation to the women and peace and security agenda. While taking note of the conclusions and recommendations of the report, which should be duly reflected in our future action, we would expect a greater focus on the situation in Ukraine, owing to Russia's ongoing unprovoked and unjustified war on that country. The war has resulted in unprecedented suffering for women and girls, including due to their mass displacement, which means that they face risks of human trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence. And we have seen how real and horrific those risks are.

Attacks on education, and using schools for military purposes, are serious impediments to the education of women and girls, and that ultimately limits their participation in social, political and economic life. We would like to take this opportunity to express our support for the Safe Schools Declaration and encourage all States to endorse it in order to create a clear link between the protection of schools from attacks and military use and women's security and participation in all forms of decision-making processes. In that regard and in conclusion, we are deeply concerned about the deterioration of the human rights situation in Afghanistan, as is also pointed out in the Secretary-General's report. The situation of Afghan women and girls is particularly alarming. Their right to education and work is now at stake. Overall, they are facing a highly uncertain future, which is a problem that deserves our continued and urgent attention.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Palestine): On behalf of the State of Palestine, I express our appreciation for Gabon's leadership of the Security Council this month and for its convening of this important debate on women and peace and security. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Sima Bahous, the African Union Special Envoy, Ms. Bineta Diop, and Ms. Zahra Nader for their briefings.

The women and peace and security agenda is a crisis-prevention agenda, but it is also a life agenda. Women's networks, including women human rights defenders, have long been lifelines for their communities. They have demonstrated leadership in conflict-affected countries and humanitarian emergencies, and their work has been essential to maintaining social cohesion, fostering resilience and promoting stability, even against formidable odds. They must be protected and supported. The indispensability of their role is amplified today against a backdrop of converging global crises that are affecting every country and people. Women must be a central part of the solutions we seek.

In our country, Palestinian women have long played a prominent role in leading and shaping the national liberation struggle and carrying their share of the nation's burdens. Since its inauguration in 1929, the Palestinian Women's Movement has been a unifying force, helping to rally our people around one identity and one national vision for justice and freedom. Palestine remains committed to preserving the gains of our historic women's movement and pledges to continue engaging and supporting our younger generation of women and girls in all aspects of life, with the human security perspective being central to all our efforts.

We are committed to protecting women from violence and discrimination; promoting their full and equal participation at all decision-making levels, whether in peacebuilding, conflict resolution or negotiations, including our reconciliation dialogue; and promoting their empowerment to ensure individual well-being, as well as their collective contribution to national recovery and the development and strengthening of national capacities. In fact, though Palestine remains deprived of independence, we would point to many of our experiences as representing best practices long supported by the international community, including UN-Women. The State of Palestine acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2014 and

established a national committee to harmonize national legislation with international treaties. Despite countless obstructions by the illegal Israeli occupation and societal constraints, we have persisted with that effort.

Similarly, we have established a national committee for implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and with Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16 in mind we have developed a national action plan for the period from 2020 to 2024 that focuses on the four pillars of prevention and protection, accountability, participation and relief and recovery. Work is under way to provide sustainable social, legal, psychosocial and health, shelter and protection services to women and girls to meet their needs and enable them to thrive. We are also working on building women's capacities as front-liners and early responders to conflict-related emergencies and humanitarian crises. In fact, a Palestinian woman, as Minister of Health, has successfully led our national response to the coronavirus disease.

But despite all the gains made, Palestinian women continue to face immense challenges and are paying the heaviest price for the ongoing injustice being done to the Palestinian people. The reality faced by Palestinian women and their families is one of widespread violence and terror inflicted both by the Israeli occupying army and the Israeli settlers, who wilfully kill and injure civilians, including women and their children, carry out arbitrary arrests and unlawful detentions and practise physical and psychological harassment and intimidation at checkpoints. Other forms of such violence and terror include the confiscation and annexation of lands; the construction of settlements and the annexation wall; home demolitions and expulsions; forced displacement; the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip; and the systematic denial of Palestinians' basic and inalienable rights, including their fundamental right to return, to self-determination and to live in peace and security.

Moreover, Israel targets human rights defenders, including women. While their protection has been among the primary demands in this Chamber today, Israel has instead launched a hostile campaign against them, going so far as to designate Palestinian civil-society organizations, including the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, as terrorist organizations. All of that is being done for the sole purpose of maintaining the illegal colonial occupation and its subjugation, persecution and domination of the Palestinian people under a system of apartheid. There can be no doubt

that the Israeli occupation remains the main obstacle to achieving women's rights and peace and security in occupied Palestine. The impact is generational, continual and enormous.

At its first meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, which was held in June, the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security of the Security Council called on Israel to cease

“all measures that affect the physical and psychological well-being and that have an impact on all aspects of the daily lives of Palestinian women living under occupation” (S/2022/557, *annex*, p. 4).

As Israel has openly declared its intent to continue its illegal occupation and all its illegal practices, we call on the Security Council to act. The Council must adopt measures in line with international law, including its own resolutions, to hold Israel accountable and provide protection to the Palestinian people, including women. Only by ending impunity and achieving accountability can the Palestinian people, including its women, be enabled to finally realize their rights to live in peace, security and dignity.

In conclusion, I convey the solidarity of Palestine's women with all women around the world who struggle against violence and oppression and strive for justice, peace and better lives for themselves, their families, their communities, their nations and our world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Lagatie (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to stress that Belgium fully supports the statements made on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Belgium thanks the Gabonese Republic for having centred this annual debate on women's resilience and leadership. Indeed, effective action to counter underinvestment and persistent gaps in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is vital.

Let us begin by recognizing women's resilience and leadership in the face of adversity and systemic discrimination. I would like to highlight three key points.

First, we must remove structural barriers, especially in areas plagued by armed groups. Failure

to combat inequalities, guarantee women's rights and eliminate conflict-related sexual violence impedes the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels of decision-making. In that regard, the global anti-gender movement is particularly worrisome, reversing generational gains, as the Secretary-General has demonstrated in his report (S/2022/740).

Secondly, we need concrete implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Belgium takes seriously the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report and the calls of civil society. In that spirit, my country is already implementing its fourth national action plan on women and peace and security for the period 2022-2026. We encourage all States that have not yet adopted a national action plan to start working on such a plan. Belgium stands ready to share its experience.

Thirdly, supporting women peacebuilders, women human rights defenders and women's rights organizations is crucial. Therefore, I am proud of our support for the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and now also in Ukraine. The Fund helps women-led organizations and women's rights organizations to participate in decision-making, prevent conflict and respond to crises, such as Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine.

Finally, let us give the women and peace and security agenda the priority it deserves in regional organizations. A transformative approach to gender is needed everywhere. To that end, Belgium has used its current chairmanship of the Forum for Security Cooperation, within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to integrate the women and peace and security agenda into the Forum's work.

Belgium is convinced that today's discussion will help identify ways to further value the resilience and leadership of women and girls. It is up to States to move from analysis and promises to effective action. Without that, we will not be able to reverse current trends or build a lasting peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important debate on the theme

“Strengthening women’s resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups”.

Women play an essential role in all areas of life, including through their participation in political life and socioeconomic reconstruction, in addition to their pivotal role in preventing and resolving conflicts, peace talks, peacebuilding, maintaining peace, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction.

The Government of Yemen has adopted a national action plan in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000). It includes programmes to implement the four strategic goals of protection, participation, prevention and assistance, with the participation of political decision makers and policymakers from all levels of Government, including security authorities, women-led civil society organizations, young people, academia and the private sector, with a view to implementing national programmes based on the principles of partnership, inclusive leadership and accountability.

Yemeni women participated in the Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference held in January 2014, which was a major national event and an exemplary forum that reflected women’s interests and political will; indeed, 30 per cent of the participants were women. Women also participated in the constitutional drafting committee, which included four women among its 17 members. Yemeni women also participated in delegations to peace negotiations.

The Yemeni Government issued a directive to reactivate the women’s national committee after the interruption of its work following the coup by Houthi militias, which had resulted in the loss of all the committee’s achievements for Yemeni women at the national level. The committee is currently reactivating its branches in the governorates in order to provide essential support for women’s work, women’s issues and women’s development

We have also set up a national commission, including women representatives, which will investigate alleged violations of human rights, in particular violations against Yemeni women in all governorates, and will refer violations to special courts in which perpetrators will be prosecuted.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is working with the Ministry of the Interior and civil society organizations of young people and women to identify the security concerns of women, men and children,

as well as to identify gaps in the security sector and issue recommendations for adopting protection and preventive measures against all aspects of violence and establishing an electronic system for reporting and documenting such matters. Efforts are under way with various ministries to integrate the women and peace and security agenda into their institutional structures with the aim of building capacity for policymaking and planning.

Women’s participation in decision-making leads to radical changes in achieving transitional justice. In that context, the Presidential Leadership Council is committed to upholding the Charter of the United Nations, advancing peace, ending human suffering, promoting equal citizenship and empowering women and young people in order to realize their goals.

The Presidential Leadership Council also adopted important measures for promoting the meaningful participation of women by appointing eight women to subsidiary committees of the Presidential Leadership Council, who will contribute their expertise and technical support to creating conditions conducive to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace, including the participation of women leaders in the efforts to establish and implement a United Nations truce and the work of the group negotiating with the Houthi militias to reopen the main roads to Tai’z governorate, which has been besieged for more than eight years.

The Presidential Leadership Council appointed a female judge to the Supreme Judicial Council, which represents an additional improvement in the composition of the judiciary. Consultations are currently ongoing in the Presidential Leadership Council to appoint two women to the governmental team that will negotiate with the Houthi militias on achieving a comprehensive peace and resuming the political process.

The Yemeni Government welcomed the early 2021 decision taken by the Security Council Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) to list the Houthi leader, Sultan Zaben, as a terrorist. He played a major role in terrorizing, detaining, torturing and raping Yemeni female political activists held in secret prisons. Even so, the Houthi militias have continued their violations against Yemeni women, depriving them of their political and economic rights while limiting their freedom of movement, despite it being a basic right guaranteed by the Constitution.

In conclusion, the Yemeni Government recognizes the importance of the distinctive role played by women when it comes to achieving social cohesion, socioeconomic and political transformation. It also recognizes their ability to be resilient and make fundamental contributions to peacebuilding. In that regard, we thank all our regional and international partners, in particular the Government of Norway, which supported Yemen in the implementation of our national action plan for women, peace and security by providing funds and expertise. We call on the international community as well as sisterly and friendly countries to lend further support to the Yemeni Government so that we can meet our commitments in relation to fulfilling the women, peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): At the outset, Thailand wishes to express its appreciation to Gabon for convening today's important open debate to advance the women and peace and security agenda.

Women constitute half of the world's population and are a crucial part of our efforts to achieve peace, security and sustainable development. As different forms of armed conflicts plague various regions of the world, women and girls continue to suffer disproportionately therefrom. They face multiple challenges in times of instability and strife, from sexual and gender-based violence to deteriorating livelihoods, from forced displacement to loss of human security.

Despite that, however, women and girls should not only be seen as victims of conflicts and instability. We must also see them as active agents for peace and transformative change. In this regard, I would like to highlight the following four points.

First, women's participation is crucial. We must promote the role and leadership of women in peace processes and in policy decision-making at all levels. Given the fact that women are key pillars of every society, their inclusion can certainly give more chances for peace and security, as well as for sustainable development. In Thailand, our national measures and guidelines on women, peace and security seek to enhance the role of women with a view to addressing conflict and political and social unrest. Currently, in collaboration with the UN-Women, we are in the process of developing new measures and guidelines for the next cycle.

Secondly, women's empowerment is equally important. When women are empowered, they become more resilient, which enables them to effectively participate in peace talks, political discussions, institution-building and so on. They can better engage in a wider range of economic activities and contribute to efforts aimed at growth and development, which could in turn lead to reducing the likelihood of conflicts and to increasing chances for enduring peace and stability.

Out of this conviction, Thai peacekeepers, working under the auspices of the United Nations, have undertaken development activities and engaged with local community leaders, including women and girls, to help address their vulnerabilities and promote their empowerment through capacity-building and training, based on Thailand's experience and best practices. We believe that it is our responsibility to support host countries in building a solid foundation for sustainable development and lasting peace for all.

Thirdly, increasing women personnel in United Nations peacekeeping operations must be encouraged. We are convinced that their abilities to build trust and gain access to communities and women in host countries are invaluable assets. Thailand supports the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy that seeks to increase the representation of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations in a sustainable manner. As a troop-contributing country, the ratio of women peacekeepers that Thailand has employed is high, and we will continue to work to further promote women's participation at higher levels, including by providing training and capacity-building. A specialized training is in effect to generate more women peacekeepers, who have already been deployed in the field, including in South Sudan.

Lastly, Thailand believes that for any arrangement for peace and stability in conflict areas to be effective and sustainable, there needs to be close dialogue and engagement with the region concerned. The views of the region affected by conflict, including the ideas and concerns of women of the region, from community leaders to policymakers to those at the grass roots, must be taken into account. In sum, the voices of the affected region matter. The voices of women and girls matter, and the voices of women and girls in regions affected by conflict matter even more.

In closing, in pursuing the women and peace and security agenda, Thailand reaffirms its commitment

to gender equality and women's empowerment, as highlighted by our Prime Minister's inaugural statement at the Global Summit of Women in Bangkok in June 2022. It is our firm belief that only through the realization of diversity, equality and inclusion will a society enjoy enduring stability and the fruits of sustainable development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, which consists of 55 States Members of the United Nations and the European Union, and is co-chaired this year by Botswana, Costa Rica and Croatia.

The women and peace and security agenda continues to play a pivotal role in advancing women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and leadership in all stages of political, peacebuilding and conflict-prevention processes, consequently making the processes more effective and inclusive. The inclusion of women is also important for successfully preventing atrocity crimes and for the effectiveness and sustainability of peace processes.

Genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing entail a gender perspective and have a gender impact. As a result, there is a complementarity and mutual support between the responsibility to protect (R2P) and mechanisms that address sexual and gender-based crimes. By improving prevention and protecting women and girls from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, abduction and other crimes, and by including women in atrocity-prevention efforts, as well as by facilitating their role as agents of change, the United Nations and its Member States can take practical action to uphold the responsibility to protect.

Analyses of situations in which there is a risk of atrocity crimes often fail to include gender and intersecting inequalities. When a gender perspective is applied, it often groups women with children as a vulnerable group. This is insensitive to the many ways in which gender permeates atrocity crimes.

Gender-based discrimination and inequality, including the systematic oppression of women and girls, are important risk factors that can contribute to atrocity crimes. Addressing root causes of gender-based discrimination and violence, as well as hearing and

elevating women's voices on their unique experiences and needs in atrocity situations, can enhance prevention strategies and contribute to lasting peace. We underscore that women's organizations play a key role in providing timely and sensitive early-warning information, resolving tensions among communities through intercommunal dialogue and countering hate speech and incitement to violence. Women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and leadership must be integral to all efforts across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, and gender equality and human rights must be a central part of all peace agreements.

In this context, the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect would like to call upon all States Members of the United Nations to increase support for the women and peace and security agenda, resolution 1325 (2000) and all subsequent related resolutions, and to meaningfully contribute to their swift and full implementation. We urge all Member States to respect and fulfil all their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. We also call on Member States to work to prevent and respond to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination targeting women and girls. This includes Member States working to end impunity for serious crimes committed against women and girls and ensuring that all incidents of sexual violence are fully investigated, prosecuted and tried in a competent court and in accordance with international standards.

By enhancing our understanding of the gender dynamics of atrocity crimes and their risks, including through consultation and meaningful engagement with affected populations, strengthened analysis, as well as monitoring and reporting, we can improve the effective implementation of the responsibility to protect. States must recognize the various roles that women play and take that into account in all conflict- and atrocity-prevention strategies. States must uphold gender equality and eliminate sexual and gender-based violence as part of atrocity prevention and ensure women's full, equal and safe participation and leadership as a key element of fulfilling their responsibility to protect populations from atrocity crimes.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Ms. Estrada Girón (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank His Excellency Mr. Michael Moussa

Adamo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic, for convening this open debate. I also thank the panellists for their valuable insights.

The historic resolution 1325 (2000) and its subsequent resolutions reaffirm the important role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, negotiations, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, as well as humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction. In that regard, it is the responsibility of States and of the United Nations to ensure effective compliance with the provisions of the global women and peace and security agenda.

There is no doubt that strengthening the resilience of women in regions plagued by armed groups is a fundamental issue and should prevail on the agenda of the Council. States' actions to achieve that end must be complemented by binding commitments, such as the implementation of existing disarmament legislation. Armed violence is a scourge that is strengthened by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, undermining their protection, their physical and moral integrity, and undoubtedly hinders the creation of an environment that fosters integral and sustainable human development. We believe that the Arms Trade Treaty is an accurate instrument capable of guiding States on an effective regulation of the international arms trade, whose guidelines prevent the diversion of weapons. Likewise, it is a priority to comply with the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and to incorporate the participation of women as agents of peace and prevention.

Guatemala gives special priority to the participation of women in peacekeeping operations. According to national data from the Ministry of Defence, a total of 300 women have been deployed as military and civilian personnel in various missions. Those women have demonstrated that they can perform adequately under the same difficult conditions as their male counterparts. It is imperative that our countries hire and retain women in peacekeeping, as data shows that they have had a positive impact in those environments.

In addition, Guatemala considers that regional organizations are among the key actors in charge of implementing this important agenda. As stipulated in resolution 2242 (2015) and subsequent resolutions 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019), while the main role of implementing this global agenda falls on States,

regional organizations and United Nations entities play an important complementary role.

National action plans are a vital product of resolution 1325 (2000) and should be a valuable tool for States to implement their commitments and for civil society to support them in implementation efforts. They are practical documents that provide an opportunity for national stakeholders to identify priorities, determine responsibilities, allocate resources and initiate strategic actions within a defined time frame to implement policies and programmes that respond to the needs and priorities of countries currently affected by conflict or in post-conflict situations.

Guatemala reaffirms the importance of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding and peacekeeping and stresses the importance of the inclusion of all segments of society in order to ensure that the needs of all sectors, especially the most vulnerable, are addressed.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Bakradze (Georgia): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the presidency of Gabon for convening today's meeting. I would also like to join my colleagues in thanking the briefers for their excellent presentations.

Georgia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to make some additional comments in my national capacity.

While global gender parity in the peace and security dimension has yet to be achieved, we welcome every effort by participating States to increase women's participation in areas pertaining to international peace and security. Regrettably, despite the increasing awareness of their contributions worldwide, girls and women face various obstacles to their activism. We share the concerns raised in the Secretary-General's report on women and peace and security (S/2022/740) regarding the numerous barriers compounded by predominant gender stereotypes that girls and women have to overcome in order to exercise their right to participate in public and political life.

Georgia spares no effort to ensure the meaningful engagement of women in the peace process and continues to attach significant importance to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, in

accordance with the subsequent Security Council resolutions and the respective national action plan. Let me note that the Government of Georgia is finalizing its fourth national action plan on women and peace and security. The plan is based on the Government's approach of integrating gender perspectives in the security sector and in decision-making processes by using a gender lens in peace negotiations and promoting the meaningful participation of women and girls in conflict prevention and resolution.

Women and girls are disproportionately and dissimilarly affected by wars, conflicts and crises. Russia's illegal, unprovoked and brutal war against Ukraine has highlighted the importance of focusing on women and the women and peace and security agenda. The continued occupation and creeping annexation of the Georgian regions of Tskhinvali/South Ossetia and Abkhazia bluntly violate the principles of the United Nations Charter and undermine the rules-based international order, threatening regional and global security. Regrettably, women and girls living in the Russia-occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia continue to suffer from persistent violations of their fundamental human rights and are unable to benefit from the human rights protection framework of the Government of Georgia.

At each round of the Geneva International Discussions and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, the Georgian delegation actively raises the needs and priorities of women internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected women. The topics are highlighted with the co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions — the European Union, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as with other international and regional organizations, in order to properly reflect the needs and priorities of women IDPs and conflict-affected women in peaceful conflict-resolution processes. Furthermore, for the same purpose, with the support of UN-Women Georgia, participants from the Georgian side of the Geneva International Discussions hold regular meetings with representatives of civil society, including forcefully displaced conflict-affected women, as well as women's rights defender non-governmental organizations.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm Georgia's commitment to advancing the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda at the national

level, as well as to contribute towards the promotion of its implementation globally.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Dominican Republic.

Mrs. Cedano (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Dominican Republic commends Gabon for the convening of this important open debate, and we acknowledge its leadership in including in the women and peace and security agenda the crucial perspective of women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups.

Women's resilience and leadership are key factors on the path towards sustainable peace. To foster them is to foster peace. Supporting them is our shared responsibility.

In a context of escalating armed conflict and violence, women's leadership as human rights defenders has led to a more comprehensive response and a greater awareness of the need to protect the dignity of all people in conflict. However, unfortunately, women have paid a high price.

The Security Council already met on this issue, when earlier this year it addressed the reprisals suffered by women human rights defenders (see S/PV.9016). Many were imprisoned, abused, harassed or disappeared for advocating for the rights of the most vulnerable or for simply claiming their essential place at the negotiating table.

We note with regret that the situation continues to deteriorate. Structural and practical obstacles to women's participation in peace processes and peacebuilding still persist. Despite that, women do not, and will not, give up because they are certain that their efforts are for the common good, not for the benefit of special groups. That is called resilience.

While there continues to be a sharp increase in global military spending, little is being invested in breaking down barriers. The truth is that, when it comes to peace, the only viable investment is one that is directed, with political will, towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the full and meaningful participation of women with their unique and inclusive perspectives, such as their activist demands to silence the guns in Africa, ensure access to education in Afghanistan or report on missing persons in Syria.

Despite the many challenges ahead, the Dominican Republic remains firmly committed to supporting an international system that allows for women's participation, recognizes their contributions and accepts, as a common principle, that no significant change is possible without their full participation. We call on all relevant bodies, particularly the United Nations system, to uphold as a priority the defence and protection of women who, with leadership and resilience, remain determined to contribute to the building of better countries for all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): I thank the presidency of Gabon for organizing this important annual open debate. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ms. Amina Mohammed, the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Sima Bahous, and the other briefers for their comprehensive remarks.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, and of Croatia, on behalf of Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

The implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is imperative to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, especially in conflict-affected situations. The Security Council adopted the historic and landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, in 2000, when Bangladesh was a member of the Council. However, the implementation scenario is not very bright. We have many pending tasks in order to achieve its full implementation. Nevertheless, we may take inspiration from the latest report of the Secretary-General, wherein he mentioned that:

“The women, peace and security agenda is not just an answer to historic wrongs and marginalization, but an opportunity to do things differently.” (*S/2022/740, para. 7*)

Bangladesh had its own horrific experience of sexual violence against women during its war of liberation in 1971, when more than 200,000 women were violated. Despite being occupied with numerous challenges in rebuilding a war-ravaged country, we took measures for their immediate rehabilitation. The perpetrators were brought to justice through a trial process, and the contribution of victims was officially recognized.

Inspired by our own experience, we gave shelter to more than 1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals — the Rohingyas — a large majority of whom are women and girls. We are providing all critical support necessary for them. Unfortunately, five years later, no progress has been made on their repatriation due to a lack of genuine goodwill on the part of Myanmar.

Let me now offer a few thoughts to reinforce women's resilience in advancing the cause of peace.

First, through political support, an effective national action plan is critical to taking forward the women and peace and security commitments in a country. Bangladesh is among the 103 countries that have formulated national action plans on women and peace and security. We encourage all Member States to formulate a national action plan with performance indicators.

Secondly, financing has remained a major concern for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in conflict-affected areas. It is alarming that, instead of diverting necessary resources to support causes, such as the women and peace and security agenda, we continue to see an increase in world military spending, which reached an all-time high of \$2.1 trillion in 2021. We place emphasis on partnerships among United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, the public sector and non-traditional donors to find new and innovative sources of funding.

Thirdly, material support to women peacebuilders and their families, including psychosocial support to women victims, is essential for the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding in conflict situations. Effective early warning, community engagement and information campaigns by peacekeeping missions can ensure a conducive environment for women peacebuilders. We also emphasize the role and involvement of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in advocating the women and peace and security agenda in conflict areas. As the current Chair of the PBC, we have put women and peace and security in the priority list of its programme of work for 2022.

Fourthly, we are deeply concerned over the wide range of security, humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences resulting from the illicit flows of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). We also express our concern that such proliferation of SALWs

disproportionately affects women and girls. We call upon all States to ensure that the supply of SALWs is limited only to Governments or to entities duly authorized by them.

Finally, we underscore the importance of institutionalizing gender equality and women's participation in the capacity-building of national institutions. Capacity-building in the security and judicial sectors in a fragile setting is also crucial to holding the perpetrators of violence against women accountable.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Koba (Indonesia): Let me begin by commending your initiative, Madam President, to hold today's debate on the women and peace and security agenda. We thank the briefers for their briefings.

Strengthening women's resilience in emergency and complex situations is essential to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. However, as highlighted by the briefers, we witness how challenges remain, both in protection efforts and in the participation of women, and how compounding factors intertwine to create a perfect storm against the collective efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda.

Such extraordinary challenges require extraordinary efforts. In that context, Indonesia supports the proposal set out by the Secretary-General on the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) to insist on women's meaningful participation in all peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The meaningful contribution of women should be present across the peace continuum, from prevention and conflict resolution to peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development. To realize that notion, allow me to put forward three points.

First, we must ensure the highest political commitment and support. That principle has always guided us. In 2014, a presidential regulation was signed to provide the highest political basis for the protection of women and children in conflict situations. In less than a year, we issued a ministerial guidance to ensure the implementation of the presidential regulation at the national and subnational levels. Since then, the implementation of the agenda has advanced significantly, resulting in a large increase in Indonesian women's participation in peace and security programmes.

Secondly, we must establish platforms and bolster human capital. In 2020, Indonesia initiated the establishment of the Southeast Asian Network of Women Peace Negotiators and Mediators. The Network has grown stronger through the exchange of best practices and the capacity of the women of South-East Asia for peace negotiation and mediation has been strengthened. Together with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, Indonesia is working to help empower women and young people in Myanmar's peace and development process. In Afghanistan, the Afghanistan-Indonesia Women's Solidarity Network aims to empower Afghan women as agents of peace at all levels, particularly at the grass-roots level. Of course, lasting change can come only from the people themselves and cannot be implanted from the outside. Any assistance should be geared to what the people need to establish a peaceful, stable and prosperous nation.

Finally — and this is my last point — we must amplify the substantive role of women's leadership in order to foster long-lasting and sustainable peace. Women in United Nations operations are still underrepresented in most leadership roles. Only 12 of 37 United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions are led by women. As the Secretary-General says in his report (S/2022/740), the need for women's leadership is important, especially in areas such as Afghanistan where there are major issues related to the protection of women. Indonesia shares and supports the view that a specific and targeted focus on women's empowerment and protection in Afghanistan is needed. They must be better heard. One way to ensure that would be to create a United Nations function or position focused on Afghan women that could help everyone better understand the unique circumstances facing Afghan women and find practical, long-lasting solutions to those problems.

We need to redouble our efforts to increase women's meaningful participation in advocating the peace agenda within the United Nations system. Indonesia remains steadfast and stands ready to support the United Nations in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. Investing in women's resilience and leadership is indeed investing in a sustainable and peaceful future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Konfourou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by commending the delegation of Gabon for its admirable leadership of the Security Council this month. I should note that Gabon's presidency has been marked by important initiatives such as today's open debate on strengthening the resilience of women in regions plagued by armed groups — a burning issue of our times.

As the Council knows, since January 2012 my country, Mali, has been going through a deep and multidimensional crisis whose innocent victims unfortunately are mainly women, children and the elderly. Those vulnerable segments of our society are regularly subjected to physical, psychological and moral violence by illegal armed groups and other organized crime entities. Our experience as a country in conflict has clearly shown that women, beyond being mere victims, have a strong capacity for resilience. Their crucial roles in conflict prevention, management and resolution makes them true actors for peace. The fact is that since the outbreak of the crisis, Malian women have continued to work actively through associations, non-governmental organizations and cooperatives to support civilian populations in protecting and defending women's and children's rights, rebuilding the social fabric and institutions and engaging in dialogue and reconciliation among communities. Similarly, they have continued to combat gender-based violence while pursuing income-generating activities in the most remote regions of my country. As true local mediators, Malian women continue to work to promote peaceful coexistence among our communities, despite a hostile environment of insecurity and sociocultural constraints.

In order to promote and encourage the role of women and women's leadership, the Government of Mali has adopted a national gender policy and a number of legislative and regulatory measures, including the following. First, in December 2015 we enacted a law requiring that at least 30 percent of elected or appointed officials in Mali's institutions and Administration have to be women, which has significantly contributed to women's political emergence in Mali. Secondly, in December 2017 we enacted and are implementing a law on the protection of human rights defenders, with specific provisions for rural women, particularly those in regions affected by insecurity. Thirdly, we have established a support fund for the empowerment of women and the development of children. Fourthly, we are ensuring holistic care for women victims of

conflict-related violence via specific centres that have been set up in several localities in Mali. Fifthly, we have adopted and are continuing our implementation of our national action plan for resolution 1325 (2000). I would like to remind the Council that Mali, which was a member of the Security Council for the period from 2000 to 2001, strongly supported the adoption of that historic resolution on women and peace and security.

Lastly, the number of women members of the follow-up committee for the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers process has increased from eight to 12. It also bears remembering that the Agreement contains provisions relating to the protection of women and combating impunity, including ensuring women's economic autonomy through income-generating activities.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming the Government of Mali's commitment to pursuing its efforts to enable the women of Mali to continue contributing to peace, national reconciliation, peaceful coexistence and the socioeconomic development of our country. In that context, I thank all of the partners who are assisting our efforts in that area and hope for their continued support.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania): Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

First, we thank Gabon for organizing this very important debate on the women and peace and security agenda, and we are grateful to all the briefers for their presentations, including Ms. Zahra Nader for her moving testimony.

Gender equality is an essential factor in ensuring a country's security and stability. There is evidence to suggest that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making process offers a path to sustainable peace and conflict prevention. However, despite the acknowledged fact that women are crucial to peace and security and despite their strong leadership at the forefront of protests against authoritarian leaders, women and girls all around the world are still facing suppression and being attacked and are still vastly underrepresented in public life.

Most recently, Iran has been plunged into deep public unrest with the demonstrations and protests triggered by the tragic death of Mahsa Amini. Iranian women in all their diversity are leading the change and demanding justice. The acts of violence and use of lethal force by the authorities against protesters and women human rights defenders are shocking. We also condemn Belarus for denying women many rights and freedoms guaranteed by international human rights law and for imprisoning women activists and human rights defenders, such as Maria Kolesnikova and Maria Rabkova, who led grass-roots movements protesting the fraudulent presidential elections in 2020.

We are appalled by the Taliban's systematic repression of women and girls of Afghanistan. Nearly 20 million Afghan women and girls are denied basic rights, such as the right to education and employment. Lithuania is also deeply concerned about reports of the women's rights situation in Haiti, where armed gangs are widely using rape and other forms of sexual violence to instil fear and to punish, subjugate and inflict pain on local populations. Russia's brutal and unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine is causing yet another humanitarian crisis, which is disproportionately affecting women and girls. Ongoing sexual and gender-based violence and the growing number of reported cases of rape of Ukrainian women and girls must be investigated, and those responsible should be brought to justice.

All forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, are deeply rooted in cultural norms and gender stereotypes and indisputably play a role in fuelling gender-based discrimination, perpetuating gender inequalities and holding women back. That is a huge adaptive challenge to our societies and should be addressed through appropriate changes, while including all constituents and stakeholders in the dialogue.

Evidence also shows that, in general, women human rights defenders are more likely to be targeted by State and non-State actors, including in the form of hate speech, harassment and sexual and gender-based violence. Women human rights defenders face additional and different threats compared to those faced by men, and once again such threats are shaped by entrenched gender stereotypes and ingrained social perceptions of women. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/740), such attacks are more likely to target women's personal behaviour and moral

conduct in order to belittle and shame them. We have to acknowledge that, despite the efforts of the international community, the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda must be strengthened at all levels around the globe.

Lithuania remains committed to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda nationally, as well as to supporting and promoting its implementation internationally. Lithuania has continuously supported the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund since its launch in 2016. We also cooperate closely with non-governmental organizations focused on Ukrainian women's rights with a view to providing humanitarian aid to respond to the needs of Ukrainian women and girls, both those in Ukraine and those displaced to other countries.

We encourage all Member States to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for all those who work for the protection and promotion of gender equality, including women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and advocates for gender equality, and to ensure that there is no place for impunity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Ms. Brandt (Netherlands): Let me start by thanking you, Madam President, for organizing today's important debate.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union, the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan and the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

We would like to make some additional remarks in our national capacity.

We welcome the debate's focus on women's resilience and leadership. As the Secretary-General rightly states in his report (S/2022/740), and as my colleague from Bangladesh just reiterated, the women and peace and security agenda is not just an answer to historic wrongs and marginalization but also an opportunity to do things differently. It is an opportunity for us to address the great challenges faced by women and girls in conflict situations in many corners of the world, from Afghanistan to Ukraine and from Mali to Yemen.

At a time when progress in women and girls' rights is being reversed, the number of conflicts is increasing and armed groups are committing atrocious human rights violations, we need a strong United Nations and collective action to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women leaders, peacebuilders and human rights defenders at all levels.

We also need collective action on prevention in order to address the root causes of conflict and instability, including unequal power relations, and to eliminate the gender stereotypes and negative social norms on which gender-based discrimination and gender inequality are based. To that end, we can learn from the work being done at the community and grass-roots levels, such as peace committees. We can learn from initiatives that involve men and boys, as they are an important part of the solution. And we can learn from such approaches and their success in de-escalating emerging conflicts.

Let me share the example of the work of one of our partners with pastoralist groups in South Sudan. Through so-called peace caravans, men and boys in cattle camps come together with women, girls and the elderly to reflect on gender, positive male participation and inclusive peace.

Finally, protection is key. It is unacceptable that the space for women leaders, women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders is shrinking and that they face threats and violence that place them in physical danger and prevent them from doing their important work.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains strongly committed to supporting the work of the United Nations on the women and peace and security agenda, protecting and defending the hard-won progress made for the sake of women and girls in all their diversity, protecting their rights and continuing to work collectively to ensure that their voices are heard, their contributions are recognized and their leadership is embraced. Let us seize this opportunity and do things differently.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Ms. Moutchou (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): First of all, my delegation would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on an issue of the utmost importance — women and peace and security — under Gabon's presidency of the Security Council. We also welcome the choice of the theme

this year on strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups.

Resolution 1325 (2000) is the international framework of reference for respecting and promoting the protection of women's rights in conflict situations and peacebuilding, and it emphasizes the importance of women's active participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding. The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) has strengthened the role and contribution of women in conflict and post-conflict situations and their ability to stand up to various forms of discrimination and abuse committed by armed groups in several regions of the world.

On 23 March, Morocco officially launched its first national action plan on women, peace and security in support of resolution 1325 (2000). The overall goal of Morocco's first national action plan is to contribute to the protection and comprehensive development of policies promoting equality for women, based on resolution 1325 (2000). Morocco has worked towards meeting the goals of the resolution by following a participatory and inclusive approach, with the inclusion of all relevant ministerial departments and national institutions and representatives of civil society.

The past two years have demonstrated to the international community that we no longer face only conflict-related dangers in the world, but that today's threats, including the threats to our health and the natural disasters related to climate change, are as important as military and conflict-related threats. That is why, in developing its national action plan, the Kingdom of Morocco opted for a more comprehensive and integrated approach by looking beyond the purely military concept of security. The goal is to strengthen women's resiliency in confronting emerging threats in a constantly changing regional and international context.

In order to address those issues, Morocco's national action plan is based on three main pillars.

The first pillar involves strengthening women's participation in preventive diplomacy, mediation and peacekeeping operations. In its continued commitment to peacekeeping and international security, Morocco encourages and calls for the strengthening of women's participation in those areas, based on the idea that sustainable peace can be built only through the full and effective participation of women in peace processes.

The second pillar involves the promotion of a culture of peace and gender equality. Within that framework, Morocco strives to strengthen the foundations of an open society in accordance with the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, human rights, tolerance, solidarity and the rejection of violence. Through awareness campaigns and education, Morocco emphasizes the importance of a culture of human rights and gender equality based on the fundamental principle that everyone — women and men — can enjoy their rights and participate fully in the country's development process.

The third pillar is women's economic empowerment. Morocco seeks to improve the conditions of its citizens, without discrimination, and to combat social inequalities in order to achieve sustainable and inclusive development. Women's economic empowerment is therefore Morocco's top priority in its national action plan on women and peace and security. In addition, Morocco has implemented gender-sensitive policies. We were the first in the world to implement gender-sensitive budgeting, which takes a comprehensive approach to equality between men and women in the financing of public policies, which enhances women's participation, resilience and leadership in all areas and at all levels.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to underscore that including the gender approach in post-conflict situations is key to ensuring, from the very start of the reconstruction process, sustainable and equitable development, in which men and women share resources, opportunities, decision-making and power. Prioritizing the implementation of Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security remains crucial, in particular in building back the economy through post-conflict planning, economic recovery and the re-establishment of governance.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Niger.

Mr. Ousman (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Gabon for including on the programme of work, during its presidency of the Security Council, the relevant and timely issue of women and peace and security.

As we approach the twenty-second anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, the international community faces a proliferation of security threats, of which women and

girls are, regrettably, the main victims. The recent report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2022/740) draws our attention to the indescribable suffering that women endure in conflict and humanitarian emergency situations, in particular the resurgence of attacks against women human rights defenders and increase in conflict-related sexual violence. My delegation expresses its deep concern about the 3,300 cases of conflict-related sexual violence that have been reported and calls for greater cooperation and coordination to ensure accountability and put an end to the stigma faced by the survivors of sexual violence.

With regard to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, the Niger developed a national action plan for the period 2020–2024, which focuses on the following strategic areas: prevention, protection, participation, partnership and coordination. To ensure the active involvement of women's groups and women-led civil society organizations in peace processes and political transitions, the plan focuses on removing obstacles to the meaningful involvement of women in sustainable conflict prevention and in strengthening social cohesion.

In addition, to promote the full and effective participation of women in the various spheres of public life, law number 2000-008 of 7 June 2000 instituted a quota system for elected positions in the Government and State public administration. Furthermore, to guarantee peace and prosperity, the national strategy for gender-sensitive inclusive finance, which has resulted in a considerable increase in women's access to diversified, innovative, quality and low-cost financial products and services, seeks to ensure the economic inclusion of women.

Cognizant of the fact that the rule of law and access to justice are essential to the construction of a just and peaceful society, through law No. 2011-042 of 14 December 2011 establishing a national agency for legal and judicial assistance, the Niger has ensured, without discrimination of any kind, unhindered access to justice for citizens.

At the international level, my country has participated in many initiatives aimed at advancing the women and peace and security agenda. I would like to mention the creation, in collaboration with the African Union and the European Union, on 2 January 2021, of the Group of Friends of Women of the Sahel, during an

Arria Formula meeting, co-sponsored by 12 members of the Security Council, including the Niger.

Allow me to express my delegation's satisfaction with the significant progress made in considering the gender dimension in peacekeeping and peace operations — a trend that should be encouraged, as it helps to improve mandate delivery.

The climate emergency creates additional humanitarian needs and exacerbates and prolongs existing development issues. Indeed, climate-related natural disasters, although varied in nature from region to region, are becoming increasingly frequent. They have a negative impact on human rights, disrupt livelihoods and threaten lives worldwide. In the Sahel, a region to which my country belongs, climate change, with its negative impact on agricultural and pastoral activities, as well as on water resources, is also the cause of extreme droughts and heavy rains that undermine the socioeconomic conditions of populations.

In such an environment, in which competition to ensure livelihoods fuels intercommunal conflicts that are compounded by threats to peace and security from the activities of armed terrorist groups, the disproportionate adverse impact on women and girls is clear. The Niger is of the view that the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is inseparable from Government policies to combat climate change that include the gender dimension.

At this juncture, I would like to recall that my country has revised its national gender policy to address new challenges related to the environment and sustainable development. The policy's third pillar focuses on the empowerment of women and inclusive growth in relation to sustainable environmental management, disaster risk management and humanitarian emergency situations.

In conclusion, the programmes and subprogrammes of the Niger's national strategy and plan for adaptation to climate change in the agricultural sector are being implemented with a gender-sensitive approach.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Mohammad (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to sincerely thank Gabon for convening today's important open debate during its presidency of the Security Council. I take this opportunity to wish your friendly country, Madam

President, every success in conducting its duties during the rest of the presidency.

I would also like to thank all briefers for their valuable information and express my appreciation for their ideas on the topic of today's debate regarding women and peace and security.

Our world is today facing major, complex and interconnected challenges, including that of combating the spread of pandemics such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and responding to natural disasters, climate change, persistent armed conflicts and wars, in addition to economic and financial crises, food insecurity, famine in some States and other monumental challenges. All of these have direct impacts on the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people, particularly women and girls.

We all agree that the issue of the advancement and empowerment of women is an extremely important item on the agenda of the international community. However, despite the well-deserved interest in the issue of women's empowerment, we still see that there is more to do in order to empower women in various areas.

Resolution 1325 (2000), which created the women and peace and security agenda, has been a key pillar in multilateral efforts at the international level and an important tool in promoting national, regional and international efforts in the areas of conflict prevention, conflict resolution, the advancement of societies and achieving progress in socioeconomic, development and political areas.

History has shown that women have always been the first victims of wars, conflicts and social, political, economic and security upheavals, and even those related to climate change. Nevertheless, they have demonstrated time and again, including in armed conflicts, that they have sustained an admirable capacity to endure hardships and remain resilient in the face of adversity. Women have played important and essential roles in conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, political processes, humanitarian responses and reconciliation and mediation, reconstruction and post-conflict and war recovery efforts.

Despite the commitments in the 10 resolutions that the Security Council has adopted on the women and peace and security agenda, it is important to note that the item on our agenda today requires more commitment and

political will in order to ensure its full implementation, in particular within the context of the Council's work. We believe in the important role of women in various fields and stress that their participation in political processes and peacebuilding has a positive impact on the outcome of those operations. According to relevant reports and statistics, the participation of women increases the likelihood that peace agreements will last longer and be more sustainable. Women's empowerment in crises and conflict situations should therefore be one of our most important tools in peace processes.

The State of Kuwait pays great attention to the issues of the advancement and empowerment of Kuwaiti women and the promotion and protection of their rights. In that regard, we reiterate that Kuwaiti women have continued to make gains year after year, especially after gaining their political right to candidacy and voting in 2005. Kuwaiti women have participated in political decision-making processes for many years and have occupied many high-level positions. We recently witnessed a democratic milestone in my country thanks to parliamentary elections when Kuwaiti women were once again returned to parliament after two women won their elections. And two women were also appointed to the new Government. Under the guidance of Kuwait's political leadership, we recently established the first ministry in the country's history dedicated to women and children, with the aim of building a balanced and cohesive society based on women's rights and children's protection against any kind of violation, exploitation or abuse. Its goal is also to promote the role of Kuwaiti women in advancing the country and its future while empowering women in various fields. The State of Kuwait emphasizes its continuing efforts to empower Kuwaiti women and promote their civil, political, economic and social rights in accordance with its Constitution and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 5, on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Here I would like to pay heartfelt tribute to the sacrifices made throughout our history by Kuwaiti women, who in particular faced the occupation of our country with great courage until its liberation, thanks in part to resolutions adopted by the Council. Kuwaiti women also played an important role in the country's reconstruction and building phase and in its social renaissance, and have been essential to the

State of Kuwait's efforts to address the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

In conclusion, I would like to note an important part of this month's report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2022/740), which is the Council's consideration of the women and peace and security agenda. According to the report, 69 per cent of Council resolutions included references in 2021 to women and peace and security, representing a 5 per cent increase compared to 2020. Moreover, a larger and indeed unprecedented number of women briefed the Security Council in 2021, with 62 women civil-society representatives invited to brief the Council that year, compared to 25 for the years between 2000 and 2015. We welcome that important progress and commend the Member States that contributed to it. We hope that this progress will continue to ensure that the voices of women are heard and that they can participate effectively in the Council's work.

We are proud that the delegation of our sister nation of the United Arab Emirates, the current Arab representative on the Security Council, is led by a woman, along with a team of women diplomats, and we salute their exceptional efforts to make Arab voices heard in the Council, including those of Arab women.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guyana.

Ms. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I congratulate you, Madam, and the Gabonese Republic on your presidency and am grateful for the convening of this annual Security Council debate on women and peace and security under the theme "Strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace and in regions plagued by armed groups." I thank Ms. Amina Mohamed, Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women and our other briefers for their presentations, and would like to recognize their active role in advancing the women and peace and security agenda.

We are meeting at a time when it appears that gains in the women and peace and security agenda are being rolled back. We must therefore redouble our efforts. Guyana remains fully committed to the agenda and to the overall empowerment of women. We reaffirm our support for ongoing efforts to strengthen women's resilience and leadership and to address the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls.

In regions affected by armed conflict, women continue to demonstrate immense resilience in the direst circumstances. The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2022/740) highlights some of the growing challenges faced by women and girls in conflict-affected countries, from forced marriages, trafficking and sexual violence and exploitation to acute hunger and the inability to access medical care. The report lays bare the urgent need to enhance women's participation in decision-making, among other things. Women are part of the solution and must be part of decision-making in an equal and meaningful manner. That is fundamental to the maintenance and sustenance of international peace and security.

But for us to build resilience and strengthen women's leadership, we must address existing barriers. One of the most important indicators for strengthening leadership and building resilience for peace is the extent to which women are included in the institutions of governance. In Guyana, we have increased and continue to promote women's political participation, leadership and representation at all levels of Government. At the international level, we continue to advocate for women's inclusion and empowerment, while contributing to humanitarian efforts aimed at protecting women and children. Guyana has also consistently registered its strong support for the women and peace and security agenda through the establishment and implementation of mechanisms that seek to realize the full and equal participation of women in conflict prevention and peacemaking processes. That includes disarmament, arms-control and non-proliferation matters, as well as promoting the greater involvement of women at all levels in the prevention and reduction of armed violence and armed conflict.

A gender-intersectional approach is imperative if we are to meaningfully address the involvement of women in peace and security. There are already robust frameworks in place, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We must together take collective action to fulfil the implementation of those obligations.

In conclusion, Guyana stands ready to support all constructive efforts aimed at the advancement of women in all spheres in order to build a better future for all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mrs. Shapir Ben Naftaly (Israel): Allow me to congratulate Gabon on its presidency.

Israel ratified resolution 1325 (2000) in 2005, appointed a Special Envoy to address the issue and works constantly with leading partners to implement the resolution.

Israel was the third country in the world to have a woman, Golda Meir, fulfil the highest political responsibilities as Prime Minister. Gender equality is enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence.

Israel has always believed that women play an integral part in the prevention of conflict, dispute resolution, peace processes and negotiations, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. For that reason, Israel has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to the women and peace and security agenda at all levels — locally, nationally and internationally.

Terrorism and war are global phenomena to which, unfortunately, the Israeli people are exposed on a regular basis. The citizens of many Israeli southern cities have had to cope with the long-term effects of attacks at the hands of terrorist organizations, including Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, both during emergencies and in their day-to-day lives.

That has emphasized the need to establish a unique model that supports those communities as a whole, as well as each of their members individually. The Israeli Trauma Coalition, in partnership with relevant Israeli authorities, established five resilience centres in southern Israel, which provide individual and family care and strengthen local authorities' preparedness for emergency situations and security threats.

Resilience is measured in times of conflict but is built in times of peace. At Beit Hagefen in Haifa, groups of Christian, Muslim and Jewish women gather regularly to train as volunteers in order to assist the community in times of emergency. Those women from diverse backgrounds are taught practical tools, while strengthening their resilience. Another group consisting of Bedouin and Orthodox Jewish women regularly hold meetings to enhance common discourse. Through their narratives, both personal and communal, those women help build trust and strengthen channels of communications. It is those channels that enable dialogue when most needed.

Over the years, mass casualty events and emergencies in Israel brought about the need for a comprehensive, multidisciplinary continuum of care based on cross-sectoral cooperation and a proactive approach to emergency preparedness. Israel stands ready to work further to bring about better involvement of women in conflict-solving and resilience-building.

Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, MASHAV, implements programmes that strengthen economic and social development and build capacities for women living around the world. Those programmes, which focus on empowerment through agriculture, entrepreneurship and technology and holistic development of the health-care system aim to address gender inequality and critical aspects of sustainable development.

Humanitarian aid and guidance for promoting the global resilience of women is also provided by Israeli civil society organizations. Most recently, such a series of training programmes was designed for Ukrainian professionals and conducted in Israel. Those programmes provide the necessary tools to strengthen resilience through Israeli methods of coping with trauma in schools and communities.

The involvement of women in the fields of peace and security is vital and must be further promoted. Yet tragically, many women around the world are still fighting for their most basic human rights. The Iranian regime is guilty of severe human rights abuses against its own population, women and girls especially. The brutal suppression of women's rights by the Iranian regime, as well as the horrific repression of those protesting against such brutality, which has led to the death of hundreds of demonstrators at the hands of the Iranian police, clearly contradict the basic principles of human rights, as well as the Charter of the United Nations.

There is an undeniable correlation between inclusiveness and creating long-lasting sustainable peace. Israel is keen and willing to share its knowledge and expertise in the field of women and peace and security globally.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Boivin.

Ms. Boivin (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), I would like to thank the Security Council for the

opportunity to take part in the annual open debate on women and peace and security.

(*spoke in English*)

As we come together to report on progress made in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, we find that the momentum created 20 years ago is as critical as ever. In situations of armed conflict, gender-related harms, including sexual violence, remain rife. Today the international community must assertively recommit itself to the advancement of the situation of women and girls in conflict.

We know that gender inequality exacerbates the impact of conflict on women, who often have fewer financial resources to recover from their injuries and from damage to their property; are more likely to be discriminated against because of injury or disability; may face additional barriers to getting medical care; and are less involved in deciding where humanitarian aid is delivered. We know that military operations do not therefore take place on an equal playing field for women and girls.

Parties to armed conflict must take better account of that inequality as they fight. When it comes to the specific impact of the conduct of hostilities, gender analysis can reveal significant variations in the harmful effects of hostilities on women and men. Such trends are predictable. Military operations should be sufficiently informed by evidence of their effect on women and girls.

As set out in our recent report, we believe that incorporating a gender perspective into the application and interpretation of international humanitarian law is a building block for progress towards the alleviation of harm against women and girls in armed conflict. Specifically, international humanitarian law requires parties to armed conflict to assess and take steps to reduce the expected civilian harm as part of the application of their obligations. In our view, the expected civilian harm is more likely to be accurately assessed if viewed from a gender perspective.

A gender perspective is critical not only for ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and the principles of humanity and impartiality but also for delivering an effective response, because it helps us identify people's sources of strength, their capacities and coping mechanisms.

We have seen time and again how women have had to step into new roles in times of war and how they

do so with determination and strength. While men continue to be those most likely to be injured or killed, go missing or be detained, women become the primary breadwinners, leaders and activists searching for their loved ones. And they do that all while still undertaking traditional caretaking work and other undervalued or unrecognized labour.

Women's capacities to adapt to and take on new roles are critical for the stability and protection of their communities. We cannot effectively build resilience without paying attention to gender in terms of both the challenges and the opportunities that it uncovers, especially in times of conflict and disruption. That is why the ICRC has committed to deepening its understanding of how a gender perspective across all areas of its work can help it better achieve its mandate.

We all have a part to play in addressing the gendered impacts of armed conflict, and the ICRC fully intends to play its part. We are encouraged to see that several States have taken concrete steps to implement their international humanitarian law-related commitments under the women and peace and security resolutions. And we ask that States do more.

First and foremost, we ask that States do more to ensure that the clear prohibition of sexual violence under international humanitarian law is integrated into national law, military doctrine and training. We also recommend that States incorporate a gender perspective into the application of international humanitarian law in their national action plans and other relevant policies that address international humanitarian law.

We stand ready to support States in that process and work together with them to better protect, support and empower women and girls affected by armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation had no intention of making any further statements on this agenda item considering the length

of the meeting, which has already lasted the entire day, but, because the representative of the Israeli regime, in her statement, once again misused this forum and deviated from the main subject before the Security Council, levelling baseless claims against my country, I feel compelled to respond to such unfounded allegations.

It comes as no real surprise to us for two reasons. First, the Israeli regime has always had an agenda that involves deception and the use of lies. Its villainous purpose is clear: to conceal the Zionist regime's expansionist, disruptive and terrorist policies in the region and deflect attention from the horrifying atrocities that are still being carried out in occupied Palestine, particularly against Palestinian women and girls.

Secondly, in response to international crimes, including crimes against humanity, war crimes and acts of aggression committed by this regime against the people of Palestine and other nations of the region, the Security Council has failed to uphold its mandate under the United Nations Charter. This is owing to the fact that a permanent member of the Security Council has given the Israeli regime carte blanche. The Security Council's inaction and silence will therefore encourage the Israeli regime to commit further heinous crimes.

Accordingly, it not surprising that the Israeli apartheid regime attends as important a meeting as this and speaks about women's and girls' rights, while Palestinian women and girls continue to suffer the decades-long occupation and the regime's colonial and apartheid policies and practices in occupied Palestine. The representative of the Israeli regime should have spoken about the countless numbers of Palestinian women and girls who have been victims of her regime's atrocities in Gaza and other parts of occupied Palestine.

We urge the Security Council to take responsibility and show its concern through action rather than words by constraining the Israeli apartheid regime to stop its heinous crimes and brutalities against Palestinians, in particular Palestinian women and girls.

The meeting rose at 7.55 p.m.