

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and ninety-second plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 26 August 2021 at 3.05 p.m.

President: Mr. Frank Tressler..... (Chile)



The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1592nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As previously announced, this plenary session has been set aside for a debate on the participation and role of women in international security. Two decades of United Nations Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security calling for the greater involvement of women in peace and security, in terms of both participation and decision-making, have provided us with the framework required to promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in forums on conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. However, in concrete terms, it remains to be seen how much progress has been made in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. According to an enlightening study by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), we are still behind the curve. Although the proportion of women involved in arms control and non-proliferation in general and disarmament diplomacy has increased over the past four decades, women are still underrepresented. The challenge is even greater at the leadership level, with male heads of delegation outnumbering their female counterparts by four to one in arms control and disarmament negotiations. At the current rate of progress, it will take two decades before we reach gender parity in disarmament diplomacy and almost five decades, the year 2065, before we achieve gender balance among heads of delegation.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has brought additional challenges and, in some cases, has widened the existing gender gap. Today more than ever, targeted action is needed to accelerate the process towards gender parity and improve the participation of women in arms control and disarmament. The aim of today's event is to promote a frank, candid dialogue on the progress made so far and the challenges that lie ahead in ensuring a diverse representation of women and to identify different ways and means of enhancing the participation and role of women in the field of international security in a meaningful and tangible way. Thank you very much for your participation.

It is now my pleasure and honour to welcome Ms. Carolina Valdivia Torres, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Ms. Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Bonnie Jenkins, Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security of the United States of America, Ambassador Federico Villegas, Permanent Representative of the Argentine Republic to the Conference on Disarmament, and Ms. Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Head of the Gender and Disarmament Programme at UNIDIR, to address this Conference.

Firstly, let us listen to some introductory remarks from Ms. Valdivia Torres.

Ms. Valdivia Torres (Chile) (*in a pre-recorded video statement, spoke in Spanish*): Distinguished colleagues, it is my privilege to address the Conference on Disarmament during my country's presidency, under what remain difficult circumstances owing to the pandemic. Let me begin by thanking my fellow panellists, who have generously taken time out of their busy schedules to join us today.

Chile has shown a firm commitment to strengthening gender inclusion in matters related to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation by promoting dialogue, reflection and action aimed at identifying different ways and means of enhancing the participation and role of women in the field of international security in a meaningful way.

At the United Nations, our country participates in and promotes different initiatives linked to the gender agenda, the women and peace and security agenda and the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Chile is also part of the Group of Friends for Gender Equality, the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security and the Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network, whose common purpose is to develop and review high-impact strategies as tools to increase the presence of women in the security sector and peace and mediation processes, and to move forward in implementing resolutions on conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.

Our country supports the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, which represents the renewal of our collective commitment to United Nations peacekeeping operations. The mechanisms by which we promote the women

and peace and security agenda and the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) include our national action plans. Chile already has two national action plans and is preparing a third, aimed at eliminating gender-based violence factors faced by women and highlighting their role in negotiation, mediation and peacebuilding, which will also articulate, from a national perspective, the fulfilment of the strategic objectives and implementation of the first regional network of women mediators in the Southern Cone, an alliance that Chile has entered into with Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Alongside other relevant aspects, we are pursuing three main objectives under this latest national action plan. Firstly, to incorporate areas for monitoring, evaluation and accountability, with clear indicators, by way of participatory mechanisms and, ultimately, budget allocations. Secondly, to ensure the incorporation of a gender approach into non-war-related instability scenarios and to recognize the differentiated impacts that can be caused in situations of risk, including armed conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters, as has become clear during the pandemic. Lastly, and very importantly, to reflect on how to approach the digital dimension and security (for example, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in the field of security). We hope that, through the concrete actions taken under this third national plan, we will be able to move the women and peace and security agenda closer to the fields of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

At the international level, Chile supports the call made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2018 for the Agenda for Disarmament in relation to the need to ensure the full, equal and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament as a means to attain sustainable peace and security.

As shown in international studies by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and civil society, in order to accelerate the empowerment of women in the specific fields of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, it is necessary to highlight, tackle and eliminate all obstacles to the meaningful participation of women in decision-making and negotiation processes at the regional, local and global levels. I would like to mention a specific UNIDIR study, which reveals that women account for only 32 per cent of participants in security forums in those three fields. Women heads of delegation are still in the minority to a remarkable degree. One figure speaks for itself: in 2018, 76 per cent of heads of delegations participating in the work and negotiations of the First Committee were not women. In smaller forums, such as the Group of Governmental Experts, women's participation was as low as 20 per cent. The situation has evolved since the adoption of the Secretary-General's commitment to gender parity. This means that the needs, aspirations and priorities of women are still not adequately reflected in the discussions held in these forums nor in the outcomes, recommendations and instruments that result from the negotiations conducted there.

Things are even worse for women with historically marginalized identities and characteristics, including women with disabilities, indigenous women and women of African descent. In light of the evidence, we must ask ourselves why these disparities persist, given that the meaningful participation of women appears to have been a fundamental factor in successful negotiations that have stood the test of time. It is also worthwhile contemplating why such changes have been difficult to bring about in the Conference on Disarmament and other forums. Efforts to achieve the meaningful participation of women in leadership and decision-making positions should be viewed not only through the prism of political correctness or as a means to fulfil gender quotas, but as a tool to achieve better outcomes from collaborative processes. The meaningful participation of women is just the start of our journey. International efforts have helped to bring the situation to light, leading to the implementation of concrete measures that my country has supported through, for example, its active participation in informal groups on gender for the review conferences of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Convention) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

With today's thematic discussion, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the obstacles that currently prevent the full and equal participation of women in international security forums, by providing new perspectives or building on existing ones. I invite you to

propose specific measures that can be developed in this forum and others, enabling us to move beyond words and, in concrete terms, make equity between women and men a reality.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs of Chile for her opening remarks. I now give the floor to the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu.

Ms. Nakamitsu (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs) (*via video link*): Distinguished colleagues, it is a pleasure to address the Conference today at this very important and timely event to consider women's participation and role in international security. In line with the Secretary-General's priorities and pledges for gender parity and, of course, as a proud International Gender Champion, I have made it part of my mission as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and participation in all decision-making processes related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Ensuring the full and effective participation of women in disarmament is not only the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do. In his Agenda for Disarmament, the United Nations Secretary-General outlines how ensuring gender parity in disarmament is both a moral duty and an operational necessity. International frameworks such as the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and the General Assembly resolutions on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control represent global recognition of the critical role that women play in decision-making processes related to international peace and security. Despite global acknowledgement of the importance of equal participation by men and women in multilateral forums, the reality remains one of women's underrepresentation. In most international disarmament conferences, only one third of delegates are women, and even fewer are heads of delegation. In the entire history of the 75 sessions of the First Committee, only once has a woman been the Chair. There is clearly an urgent need to bring these figures to equilibrium. As I already told the First Committee last year, it is time to accelerate progress towards gender parity in our disarmament meetings. And I call on all participating States to set standards and ensure accountability in reaching the target of 50–50 parity.

Distinguished colleagues, rising tensions and distrust have eroded the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control regime that the international community has so painstakingly constructed. As we collectively endeavour to revive the work of this Conference, it is clear that the inclusion of diverse voices who bring new ideas is crucial – crucial to preserve the relevance and effectiveness of the work of the Conference and the disarmament architecture more broadly; and crucial to ensure that the outcome of this work is fit for purpose, to respond to current and future realities.

The Conference on Disarmament has already taken up the issue of gender in disarmament. I welcome these efforts undertaken by several presidencies over the years, most recently by Argentina and today by Chile. I also commend the recent proposals made by the Australian and Canadian presidencies, for a technical update to the Conference's rules of procedure to reflect the equality between women and men. While these discussions did not lead to the changes that many, including myself, had hoped for, I nonetheless find it positive that the conversation started and that the Conference was able to have a frank exchange on the participation of women in this body. Ultimately, these discussions can lead to a systematic change in our approach to participation that tackles not only structural barriers to equal opportunities for entry but also other biases that hinder the participation of diverse stakeholders in disarmament forums and beyond.

As a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Conference is meeting today in a hybrid format, taking advantage of the new virtual conferencing platforms. This year, the Conference has heard virtual presentations by diverse stakeholders representing academic institutions, think tanks and youth champions. I hope that the Conference will continue to take advantage of the opportunity to invite new voices and diverse perspectives into its substantive discussions.

Excellencies, the Secretary-General has been very clear that achieving gender equality is a question of redistributing power. It will take the commitment of all men and women, and many simultaneous efforts to succeed in that endeavour. We must also keep in mind that

progress towards gender equality can never be taken for granted. Hard-won rights can easily be eroded if they are not protected, especially in conflict and crisis contexts.

In tandem with our efforts to enable meaningful participation of women in disarmament, we must systematically consider the gendered impact of conflict and weapons of all types. The disproportionate impact on women and girls of ionizing radiation from nuclear weapons and the implications of gender biases in the development of emerging technologies in weapon systems, such as in the field of artificial intelligence, are but a few examples. In order to be able to negotiate disarmament instruments that apply to all segments of our population, member States must consider the gender dimensions when substantively engaging on core agenda items in pursuit of these instruments' mandates.

Ensuring the equal participation of women and systematically considering the gendered impacts of weapons will require a shift towards a more people-centred approach to peace and security. Security is experienced differently by different people, depending on their gender and other factors such as location, disability and age. We must insist that all voices, particularly the voices of those most impacted by war and conflict, are given a platform from which they can be heard. We must first understand, then tear down, the structures and tackle the driving forces of systematic exclusion of women and other underrepresented stakeholders. We must ensure that we leave no one behind in our decision-making, policies and programmes. These actions are imperative for the realization of a more effective and inclusive disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Before I conclude, I would like to echo the statement made by the distinguished delegate of Australia a few weeks ago, that the participation of women should be accepted not as a matter of practice, but as a matter of principle. If there is one single principle to agree on today, I hope it can be that the voices of women globally are not worth any less than those of men, and that all girls deserve the same opportunities as boys to build our common future. The Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remind us that this is not a privilege, but a fundamental human right. As long as half of the population – women and girls – do not enjoy the same rights as men, we cannot call our world a free and an equal one.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful to the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for having generously agreed to participate from New York and for her words.

I now give the floor to the Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security of the United States of America, Ms. Bonnie Jenkins.

Ms. Jenkins (United States of America) (*via video link*): Mr. President, the vital topic of women's meaningful participation and role in international security is a subject close to my heart. The importance of including women in positions of influence and decision-making on issues of peace and security cannot be understated. This is especially so in the field of international security, and particularly the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation and arms control. These are issues that affect everyone, regardless of gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. The United States has been a proud supporter of the General Assembly resolutions on women, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation since the first was put before the First Committee in 2010.

We currently face a complex global security environment characterized by instability, conflict, record levels of displacement, well-armed non-State actors and renewed great power competition. State and non-State actors are contesting all domains of conflict and pursuing their interests with an ever-expanding variety of weapons. The concept of international security is changing too. It now includes policy areas as diverse as climate change, food and water security and health security. These are all areas where women and other vulnerable populations are often disproportionately impacted, which makes their participation in the decision-making process all the more important.

In the face of extremely difficult and complex challenges in conflict-affected regions, women have achieved significant success in moderating violent extremism, countering terrorism, resolving disputes through non-violent mediation and negotiation and stabilizing societies by enhancing the effectiveness of security services, peacekeeping efforts,

institutions and decision-making. However, we remain underrepresented in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts around the world, despite the fact that peace negotiations are more likely to succeed and to result in durable peace agreements when women participate.

This is truly unfortunate, because the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and conflict-resolution processes promotes more inclusive and democratic societies, which is critical to the long-term stability of individual countries and regions as a whole. Furthermore, the political participation and leadership of women in fragile environments, particularly during democratic transitions, is critical to sustaining lasting democratic institutions.

The United States has, for many years, been a leader in the struggle for gender equality, and we have women at the centre of our disarmament team. My predecessor, former Under-Secretary Rose Gottemoeller, did outstanding work during her tenure as the United States lead negotiator on the New START. And, as new Under-Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Affairs, I am proud to join Deputy Secretary Wendy Sherman and several other women who led the negotiating team for our recent Strategic Stability Dialogue with Russia. I also salute the wonderful women of our delegation to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, whose work illustrates the vital contributions to peace and international security that women can make when they are given the opportunity and when governments make gender equality a priority, as the United States has done.

For more than two decades, the Department of State has made gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls a key component of United States foreign policy. This reflects American values and contributes to advancing democracy and human rights, economic development and international peace and security. The Department has also worked to ensure that gender equality objectives are fully integrated into both its own and interagency strategy, planning and posture documents.

The 2017 passage of the Women Peace and Security Act enshrines in law my country's commitment to equal opportunity for women. As the first comprehensive national law of its kind, the Act promotes the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of overseas conflict prevention, management and resolution and post-conflict relief and recovery efforts. Taken together, these measures demonstrate our efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict and fragility, prevent violence and atrocities and promote stability through strategic policy guidance and training.

In April 2021, Secretary of State Blinken announced the appointment of a chief diversity and inclusion officer, who will lead a team to address historical diversity, equity and inclusion challenges within the Department of State and coordinate those efforts. More than 30 bureaux and independent offices have established councils to address those challenges, and there are more than 130 United States posts dealing with them in every region of the world. I am pleased to report that the three bureaux I oversee are also establishing councils to advance initiatives on topics such as gender equity and protection for the rights of LGBTQI+ persons.

I would like now to highlight some of our efforts abroad. In its work on the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, the Bureau of Arms Control Verification and Compliance, together with our partner, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, has prioritized gender balance in the participation of international partners in the project. Of the nine co-chairs that lead the Partnership's three task groups, one third are women. The same gender balance philosophy underpins our selection of panellists and moderators when conducting outreach activities. Finally, we actively encourage the more than 25 partner nations to diversify their respective delegations to engage more women in the important work of the Partnership.

Just a few months ago, on 8 March 2021, President Biden established the White House Gender Policy Council to coordinate a government-wide approach to gender equity and equality and create a federal gender strategy. Secretary of State Blinken designated the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues to represent him on the Council and we in the State Department will need to use our full diplomatic toolkit to meet the President's mandate.

The United States has also advocated for policies that support the full participation of women and girls in the fields of science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics, which, collectively, are the foundations of arms control. We have made significant progress but we also know that many best practices have yet to be fully realized.

Women's participation in the science and technology workforce remains a vast, untapped source of potential economic growth for all nations. Women and girls globally should have equal opportunities to pursue an education and a vocation in those areas, and policy should encourage investment in gender-equitable education in science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics internationally.

Unfortunately, as is true in so many instances when we talk about gender and other forms of equality, there is not universal recognition that women, people of colour and individuals from other historically underrepresented groups lack access to knowledge in those areas, education-related technologies or career opportunities. The systemic barriers, which result from cultural and legal norms in all countries and regions, must be overcome if there are to be women in positions where they can contribute to the policy areas of international security, arms control and non-proliferation. Such systemic barriers often exist in the details. Calling attention to and correcting those details is a critical part of overcoming this bias.

We saw the cost of inaction right here at the Conference on Disarmament when we tried to make a technical update to the rules of procedure to make them gender neutral – although we prefer the term “gender inclusive”. The current language of the rules of procedure is a textbook example of the small barriers and discrimination that women and others in international security, arms control and non-proliferation face every day. Updating this language should have taken no more than 10 minutes – it is like correcting a typing mistake.

Instead, we were subjected to obstructionism when a vocal minority blocked the decision. This is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to stand. At my most charitable, I can assume that those who objected to the update truly do not understand why it mattered. To that question, let me say that words matter; symbols matter. Referring to every officer of this Conference as a “he” is not any more inclusive than referring to them all as “she” would be.

In the final analysis, however, I think that these objections were made by those who feel threatened by the notion of any change. To those decision makers, let me say that change is inevitable. You can be part of it or you can find yourself on the wrong side of history. It is your choice.

In closing, I am proud to be the first African American to serve as an Under-Secretary in the United States Department of State and also, therefore, the first African American and woman of colour to be the Under-Secretary of Arms Control and International Security. I plan to use my position to mentor the next generation of women and people of colour who are seeking careers in international security, arms control and non-proliferation. As the founder and former executive director of the non-governmental organization Women of Colour Advancing Peace and Security, I will continue to advocate tirelessly for the inclusion of women and girls in all aspects of peace, international security, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. This is a fight worth undertaking, one that we cannot let rest.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Undersecretary Jenkins, for having generously agreed to participate in this event and for your contribution to the discussion.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Federico Villegas of Argentina.

Mr. Villegas (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I wish to express my gratitude to the Chilean presidency for organizing this important event and for kindly inviting me to participate as a panellist, and to my fellow panellists for their presentations. This is a critical issue and one of great relevance. Yet above all, Mr. President, the reason we refer to the subject of today's meeting as a great challenge is because it is about changing a reality, one of inequity, injustice and discrimination. The challenge is therefore two-fold.

As you know, when we held the presidency in March 2020, we submitted a paper to the Conference for its consideration on the Conference and gender. The purpose of the paper was to provide background information for a discussion in the Conference starting on the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) calling for the incorporation of a gender perspective into matters of peace and security. Argentina was also one of the countries that took the lead in the negotiations on that resolution.

As a country, we believe that there are opportunities to make improved progress on gender issues, which continue to be neglected, to a greater or lesser extent, in the field of disarmament. To this end, we believe that we need to evaluate what has been achieved so far and that this should then serve as a platform for further progress. So, let us ask ourselves what has been achieved so far. Allow me to start by making a general comment. Humanity tends to achieve progress in one of two ways: there are violent ways, such as through revolutions, which are attempts to change situations of structural injustice; and peaceful ways, such as through the rules of domestic and international law. But in this second way – which is, of course, the one that interests today's panel – there have historically been two types of process: in some cases, a regulation is introduced to reflect an existing material reality and give it legal form; in others, a regulation attempts to change a reality through a legal system that includes the values of a society. In the latter case, the regulation is an attempt to change situations of inequity or discrimination, even though the material reality suggests that a consensus does not yet exist in society on that regulation. This is what we are doing today, Mr. President, because if we consider what has been achieved so far, we have had significant success when it comes to adopting regulations that incorporate the gender perspective into the field of disarmament and security.

We have an Arms Trade Treaty that has been ratified by over 110 parties and that, in its operative part, clearly obliges exporting States parties, in making risk assessments, to take into account the risk of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. We have Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which is the first official legal document of the Security Council to call upon parties to armed conflict to respect women's rights. We have General Assembly resolution 73/46, which recognizes the need to facilitate the participation of women and promote equal opportunities. In his Agenda for Disarmament, which has already been mentioned today, the Secretary-General has called for the full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes. The group of experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems speaks about emerging technologies in the area of autonomous weapons and how they may diminish, perpetuate or amplify social biases, including racial and gender biases. The list goes on: we have the declaration on explosive weapons in populated areas; the Ottawa Convention, which has already been referred to here and which, under the Oslo Action Plan, requires that the different needs and perspectives of women and girls are taken into account; the Biological Weapons Convention; and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The issue is also addressed in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Undersecretary touched upon another extremely interesting point of discussion that has emerged concerning the gender impact of nuclear weapons and scientific studies that reveal that ionizing radiation affects women more intensely than men. And also, for example, within the framework of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, which Argentina has joined, we have approved the Berlin Statement calling on States to ensure that the gender perspective is incorporated into all decision-making processes related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The statistics we have heard today leave no room for doubt. On the positive side, post-conflict agreements that women have helped to negotiate are 35 per cent more likely to stand the test of time. And we know perfectly well that it would be an injustice not to pursue further progress in that regard. However, as has been made clear today, the Conference on Disarmament has an outstanding debt. Argentina has tried and we are convinced, as the Undersecretary of the United States indicated, that this is an inevitable reality and that it is up to us whether we want to be protagonists or spectators in this transformation.

We must take action to ensure that – independently of the enormous efforts you are making, and that previous presidencies have made, to approve a programme of work – a vital

issue such as this, on which approaches can be changed and improved, does not end up being held hostage to discussions on a general programme of work for the whole Conference, and that mechanisms are sought to overcome this inequity and to set an example, showing that the Conference on Disarmament is capable of making progress. That is why the proposal made by Canada in the Conference on Disarmament was so important.

Before I conclude, please allow me to leave you with one final thought. The material reality that we want to change must be transformed in such a way that women may become protagonists, and not just supporting actors, in disarmament and security issues. This not only means women here, in the Conference on Disarmament and the delegations of the First Committee, it means women in the armed forces and the security forces, women in educational institutions and defence schools, women in scientific and technological research institutions in the armed forces, women in institutions linked to arms control, and women defence experts in civil society. Why? Because, in this way, we make it possible for women to shape the packages of guarantees that are set out by the international community in all post-conflict processes concerning disarmament. For this reason, it is the women in international organizations and this Conference on Disarmament who will be able to join us in becoming protagonists of change in this Conference.

Allow me to conclude by citing a very clear quote that I am sure everyone here is familiar with, by Simone de Beauvoir, who told us that the problem of women has always been a problem of men. It is time for us to come together, men and women, to change a material reality in order to invite no fewer than half of humankind to become protagonists in creating a world of peace, security and development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador, for your participation and the words you have shared with us today. I am sure they will contribute to the debate. Lastly, we give the floor to Ms. Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Head of the Gender and Disarmament Programme at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

Ms. Hessmann Dalaqua (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research): Distinguished colleagues, I lead the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on gender and disarmament. The topic we are discussing here today – women’s role in international security – is one of our main priorities, so I am very glad to have this opportunity to speak before you today.

Generally, in UNIDIR, we prefer to focus on the “how” – how to improve women’s participation in this field – but I feel today is important also to talk about the “why”. As Undersecretary Jenkins said earlier, some people still do not understand why this is important, so I would like to take a step back and talk about why women’s participation matters and how gender norms relate to arms control and disarmament.

To begin with the basics: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes. Thus, gender norms are socially constructed differences, as opposed to biological differences, and they function as social rules of behaviour, setting out what is desirable, what is possible to do as a man or a woman in a given context. These norms shape the way weapons are seen and used in society, and they also shape the impacts of weapons and violence; this is recognized by the Secretary-General in his Agenda for Disarmament. He noted in that document that women and men are exposed to different patterns of violence and are affected differently by the proliferation and use of weapons.

In addition to shaping the impacts of weapons in society, gender norms also very much shape the way the international community works to develop and implement policy on these issues. To take the example of the diplomatic field, UNIDIR has conducted research on gender and disarmament diplomacy. We surveyed more than 80 multilateral meetings on arms control and disarmament. We spoke to dozens of diplomats and interviewed practitioners working in this area. Through that research, we were able to identify some patterns.

In multilateral forums dealing with weapons, women comprise only a third of the diplomats, and that figure contrasts starkly with the situation in other areas of diplomacy, such as human rights, where women are already 50 per cent of the diplomats. When it comes

to leadership positions, the imbalance is even greater. On average, only 20 per cent of disarmament delegations are headed by women. In interviews, diplomats shared with us their perception that arms control and disarmament as a field has rewarded characteristics, expertise and experience that are more commonly associated with men.

The ideas of who and what makes good policy in this field seem to be very much linked with masculinized norms, and this has made it more difficult for women to pursue a career in this area. This has also had an impact on the potential for diversity and innovation in the field as well. These results are presented in the UNIDIR publication *Still Behind the Curve*, which is available on our website. After we collected the data and analysed the trends related to the gender balance in disarmament, we were able to make some projections about the future. At the current rate of progress, it will take another two decades to reach gender parity in disarmament diplomacy and more than four decades, not until 2065, to achieve gender balance among heads of delegations.

To be sure, the issue of gender inequality and discrimination against women is not only confined to the disarmament field. Society at large still holds bias and prejudice against women. A 2020 study by the United Nations Development Programme, with data from 75 countries covering more than 80 per cent of the world population, showed that about half of the world, both men and women, still feel that men make better political leaders and over 40 per cent feel that men make better executives and that men have more right to a job when jobs are scarce. In many countries, the majority of the population feels that a woman should not travel abroad by herself, and 28 per cent think it is justifiable for a man to beat his wife.

On this point I would also like to mention the conclusions of a report that was recently published by the World Health Organization with data from 154 countries, that show that one in four married women above 15 years old has been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in her life. Nearly one in three women has been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence.

This is an issue that should concern the arms control community. We know that weapons are used to facilitate gender-based violence and to commit femicides. In countries with the highest rates of femicide, more than half of those killings are perpetrated using small arms.

In view of all this, it should be clear that discrimination and violence against women is a global issue; it is not a small problem that only occurs in some pockets of society; rather, it is a global problem of pandemic proportions, which has also been made worse by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. And the fact that women are standing here today in the Conference on Disarmament in the face of all these inequalities should not be taken as a proof that these issues are resolved. They are not.

In arms control and disarmament, we need targeted action to accelerate progress towards gender parity. We do not want to be waiting for decades until we have a 50–50 balance among heads of delegations. It should be clear that this is not only a numbers game, it is about ensuring equal opportunities, creating a more inclusive institutional culture and benefiting from diverse voices and perspectives.

And here is a point I would like to emphasize: creating a gender-equal culture is ultimately about assigning value to diversity and change. This is a point that has been mentioned by previous panellists. We hope that efforts to advance women's participation in disarmament will also encourage new perspectives and new thinking in arms control and disarmament.

Now I am finally getting to the “how”: how do we do this?

I would like to reiterate some points that were presented in the non-paper that Argentina circulated last year. Some of the recommendations were: to add a gender perspective to the principle of regional balance in the appointment of coordinators in the work of the Conference on Disarmament; to take gender perspectives into account when planning work under each agenda item; to take an inclusive approach to informal discussions; to use gender-inclusive language and avoid stereotypes; to encourage States to report on progress they have made in enhancing women's participation; and to provide coordinators of the working bodies with a short course on gender and disarmament.

I think these are all very good suggestions. I would also like to point out that UNIDIR and the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group often organize gender briefings and produce resources related to gender-responsive arms control and disarmament. Earlier this year, during the presidency of Bulgaria, we circulated a resource pack on gender and disarmament. The President also had some ideas that could be applied to the Conference on Disarmament, for instance: to include gender-inclusive language in resolutions; to organize briefings on gender in the context of the substance of the Conference's work; to institutionalize gender balance in panels; and to support side events or hold formal meetings on gender on the margins of the meetings.

From this, we can see there is no shortage of ideas and concrete proposals to tackle gender inequality and promote the role and the full and equal participation of women in the Conference on Disarmament. UNIDIR stands ready to support all delegations in translating the principle of gender equality into practice in the Conference on Disarmament and beyond.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Ms. Hessmann Dalaqua for her comments and acknowledge the valuable contribution she makes through the research of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, which we invite our delegates to consult. We now give the floor to those delegations that wish to take the floor to ask the panellists questions or to make statements and generate a stimulating dialogue. I give the floor to the delegate from Peru, Mr. Carlos Briceño.

Mr. Briceño (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, although this is not the first time Peru has taken the floor during your Presidency, it is the first opportunity I have had to address you personally. I would therefore like to congratulate you and reiterate my delegation's full support for your successful endeavours over these final weeks of the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Peru welcomes and celebrates the decision of the Chilean presidency to organize a thematic debate in the Conference on the participation and role of women in international security. We welcome the inspiring speech delivered by the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Ms. Carolina Valdivia Torres, this afternoon and sincerely thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations, the Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security of the United States, the Permanent Representative of Argentina in Geneva and the Head of the Gender and Disarmament Programme at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), from whom we have just heard, for their valuable contributions.

Mr. President, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is the international community's road map for promoting the empowerment and rights of women and girls around the world. More than 25 years have passed since its adoption and, although significant progress has been made, there is still much work to be done if we are to eliminate discrimination against women and young and adolescent girls and to achieve equality in all areas of public and private life. One of the areas in which insufficient progress has been made is that of the participation of women in multilateral forums on international peace and security. "Still Behind the Curve", a quantitative study by UNIDIR, shows that women account for between 30 and 35 per cent of the delegates attending meetings in the field of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, a state of affairs that has not changed significantly over the past four decades.

Mr. President, women play a very important role in conflict resolution: for example, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) reminds us that: "the participation of women is essential for achieving lasting peace. Women have proven to be agents of change and should have the opportunity to work even harder in pursuit of that goal". The role of women is also crucial to the effectiveness of peacetime dialogue. The Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations acknowledges that women are powerful agents for progress and that "involving more women will help revitalize disarmament discussions". We must therefore double down on our efforts to achieve the effective participation of women in processes aimed at achieving and ensuring sustainable peace. However, their mere participation is not enough. Their involvement must be full and meaningful and on an equal footing at all decision-making

levels. The evidence shows that the greater the presence of women in decision-making processes, the lower the propensity for conflict.

Mr. President, Peru is convinced that women's empowerment and gender equality have a direct impact on building and maintaining international peace and security. At the international level, the commitment of Peru to this important issue is constantly demonstrated in multilateral forums. Perhaps the most recent and significant example of this was on the occasion of our participation as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2018 and 2019, when Peru co-chaired, with Germany, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. Elsewhere, in our capital city, Peruvian authorities in charge of security and defence are progressively incorporating the gender perspective into the development and implementation of national policies by giving adequate consideration to the concerns, points of view and experiences of both women and men. My country's armed forces are sensitive to the call made in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security to promote national mechanisms aimed at ensuring the full and equal participation of women in political decision-making. Two months ago, the Ministry of Defence of Peru approved an action plan to implement that resolution. The main objective is to achieve equal opportunities in access to military service and to create the conditions required for women and men to reach full professional, personal and family fulfilment in the armed forces. The action plan is also aimed at further increasing the participation of women in peace missions and raising awareness of the importance of women to national defence.

Peru ranks fifth in terms of the percentage of the troops that it contributes to United Nations peace operations who are women, and a very significant number of those women have management-level positions.

Mr. President, in conclusion, Peru remains firmly in favour of the increased participation and leadership of women in matters related to international peace and security. Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for ensuring a safer, fairer and violence-free society and are also necessary if, in the long run, we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the distinguished delegate of Peru for his words. We now give the floor to the Ambassador of Australia for Arms Control and Counterproliferation, Ms. Amanda Gorely.

Ms. Gorely (Australia): Mr. President, as my country's first ambassador for arms control and counterproliferation, based in Canberra, and a long-time champion of gender equality, it gives me particular pleasure to address the Conference on Disarmament today.

Achieving universal gender equality is a core Australian priority across our foreign policy, economic diplomacy and development and humanitarian interests. Australia believes that women's full, equal and meaningful participation in international security is vital to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and sustainable peacebuilding.

But the data tells us that we, the international community, still have a long way to go. We have heard from the other panellists about the discouraging statistics. Women remain chronically underrepresented in the fields of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. This is why Australia believes in taking targeted actions to strengthen women's access to and participation in disarmament and arms control forums.

To do so requires a shift in our culture: we need to mainstream gender perspectives in the way we approach peace and security, including in the working methods of this Conference; we must strive to create an environment that allows diversity and inclusion to thrive, including the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls. This means taking steps to increase the proportion of qualified women in delegations, enhancing the representation of women in leadership roles and ensuring that women are equally included in local, national and global disarmament initiatives.

We are encouraged by a number of initiatives undertaken to date, including the calls made by Chairs of a range of disarmament meetings for delegations to strive for equal representation of men and women. We commend the work of Trinidad and Tobago in putting forward to the First Committee the draft that would be adopted as General Assembly resolution 65/69 on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and the useful

work undertaken by UNIDIR and the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group on this issue.

Ultimately though, we will be judged by our actions, not just our words. In this regard, Australia was disappointed that the Conference on Disarmament was not able to reach consensus on the draft decision to update the rules of procedure to reflect the equality of men and women. This simple but meaningful change would have sent a strong signal regarding the body's respect for the principles of diversity and inclusion and its commitment to upholding these values. We hope that the Conference will be able to effect this change soon.

Mr. President, more broadly, Australia is firmly committed to the women and peace and security agenda and will continue to advocate strongly for its objectives.

We take this opportunity to outline briefly some of the things Australia is doing in practical terms. Our second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security was released in April this year. It is a whole-of-government strategy developed in consultation with civil society. It builds on existing efforts to protect and promote the human rights of all women and girls and increase the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes.

During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Australia has upheld its commitments to that agenda by funding key instruments delivering its goals. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, of which we were a founder and are one of the top four donors, amplifies the leadership role of women in conflict prevention, crisis response and peacebuilding through grassroots and local civil society organizations. The Women and Peace and Security global facility supports activities targeting preventing and countering violent extremism, such as scaling up the successful Peace Villages Initiative in Indonesia.

My country's Ambassador for Gender Equality engages in international advocacy in support of our policies and programmes to promote gender equality. The existence of that position reflects the active commitment of Australia to promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making and leadership at all levels, giving women a stronger voice, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Mr. President, as COVID-19 exacerbates existing inequalities across the world, we must ensure that we continue to enhance women's participation and role in the field of international security in a significant way. We all have a role to play in this and we all can and should do more to strengthen the role of women in shaping policy outcomes conducive to achieving a more peaceful and secure world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Australian Ambassador for her words and give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Sri Lanka, Ms. Udani Gunawardene.

Ms. Gunawardene (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, at each session, we repeat that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Yet, regrettably, we have not been successful in reaching consensus on a programme of work, let alone the negotiations. However, regardless of the Conference's lack of progress, the world outside keeps moving and the already fragile international security situation is taking a turn for the worse. Trust in multilateralism is challenged and there are concerns about the return of strategic competition among the military Powers. It is in these worrying circumstances that we welcome this session on women's participation and their role in international security – a discussion that will shed light on an important link on the chain of disarmament and non-proliferation that is often overlooked.

In 1960, Sri Lanka produced the world's first elected female Prime Minister, who mooted the proposal that the Indian Ocean should be declared a zone of peace by the United Nations General Assembly in 1971. Over the years, Sri Lanka has seen women leaders rising up to important government positions, including the Office of the President, Cabinet Ministers, Chief of Justice and the Office of the Attorney General. In the recent past, two Sri Lankan female career diplomats have held senior positions at the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, contributing to disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

We consider that active female participation is essential in the disarmament and non-proliferation discussions and negotiations, for several reasons.

Firstly, women make up nearly half of the world's population. Women are the true strength of a nation and are inseparably linked to the human life chain. They therefore form a crucial part in shaping the world we live in and, more importantly, its security. No meaningful and sustainable peace can be achieved without the effective participation of women in the process. Women have been involved in informal peace processes over the years. While the participation of women in indigenous peace processes is important and is proved to be effective, their role should not be limited to such local processes. The voice of women in formal peace negotiations has been less heard, and their participation is less prominent. It is important to ensure that formal conflict resolution processes are inclusive, enabling their effective participation.

Secondly, conflicts affect men, women, girls and boys differently. Women and girls constitute the largest number of victims of gender-based violence. The fact that they are direct victims of security, economic, political and humanitarian crises means that women must be at the forefront of the international security discourse to ensure that their concerns are heard and incorporated into peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. Issues concerning women's and girls' rights to education and employment are also important factors for consideration and would be best explained by women themselves emerging from such communities and directly participating in negotiations.

Thirdly, it is important that we approach the discourse on women and security from beyond the victim-centric perspective that presents women and girls exclusively as targets. That portrayal not only undermines their ability to confront challenging circumstances, but also impedes opportunities for their equal participation. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, at the current rate, it will take another 50 years before gender parity is achieved in parliaments worldwide. There is a greater possibility of multilateral disarmament efforts reflecting gender sensitivity in their outcomes if there are women on their representative bodies. Furthermore, women bring different perspectives to the negotiation table from their more diverse experiences, fostering creativity and change. Effective female representation should be ensured throughout the process and not as an afterthought.

Fourthly, women's equitable participation in post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation is crucial. In post-conflict environments, women's roles, as civilians, ex-combatants or as victims, are reduced to the minimum. While the inclusion of women in post-conflict rebuilding efforts may be considered to be a moral imperative, there are compelling economic and security reasons for their inclusivity that are even more convincing in such processes.

There is a clear linkage between development and female participation. Gender equality and women's empowerment remains an integral principle of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In Sri Lanka, female deminers play a remarkable role in the national mine action programme; many of them are rehabilitated former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) combatants.

Lastly, female participation in international security-related negotiations requires their empowerment with technical expertise and negotiation skills. As a beneficiary of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship programme and, more recently, of the Women in Cyber Fellowship, I would personally highlight the importance of encouraging women to become more engaged and contribute to the disarmament and non-proliferation discourse and the decision-making process. This, in turn, would contribute to increasing the confidence of female representatives, enabling them to be more influential and meaningful in their engagement.

We appreciate the efforts made by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to enhance the role of women in international peace and security, particularly the publication of the briefing notes on gender perspectives on disarmament and the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan.

Mr. President, allow me, in conclusion, to point out one more important element. Twenty-one years have passed since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)

on women and peace and security and 26 years have passed since the launch of the Beijing Platform for Action – two important milestones in the women and peace and security agenda. There is, therefore, enough acknowledgement of the importance of this issue. What is lacking is the reflection of these commitments in actions on the ground. Political will beyond commitments enshrined in paper is therefore essential. Sri Lanka stands ready to play its role in this process.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Masmajeán (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, we thank you for organizing this debate on the theme of women's participation and their role in international security. We are also grateful to the various experts for their presentations, which help to inform our discussions. Women's participation is not just about equity. Increasing diversity is also crucial to achieving more sustainable solutions, including in the area of international security, and specifically in arms control and disarmament.

In this sense, we regret that a consensus could not be reached on the proposal to modify the rules of procedure of the Conference in order to place the feminine and masculine genders on an equal footing. That would have been a small but significant step forward in promoting and making visible the inclusion of women. Today's discussion, however, is proof that the impetus continues.

Mr. President, let me highlight a few aspects of the gender dimension that we believe must be taken into account in our arms control and disarmament activities. First, it should be noted that women are still significantly underrepresented in disarmament forums, a gap that increases at the highest levels. The challenge is not only a quantitative one, however. It is crucial to ensure that women's participation is equal at all levels in disarmament processes.

Secondly, it needs to be pointed out that women and men are differentially affected by arms trafficking and use. Men are often the most direct victims of small arms and light weapons, while women are disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence. Differences also apply to other types of weapons, such as anti-personnel mines, and studies have highlighted the differential effects of nuclear weapons on women. It is therefore important to ensure the equal, full and effective participation of women in disarmament forums, while taking into account gender issues on the ground.

For its part, Switzerland is committed to gender mainstreaming in its disarmament activities. In accordance with its national action plan on "Women, Peace and Security", it is committed to the full and effective participation of women in the field of international security. In particular, we believe that facilitating the education and training of women in this field early in their career is especially important and will bear fruit in the long run. Switzerland accordingly supports the scholarship programmes of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which make a significant contribution in this respect. In addition, we support various initiatives to integrate gender more fully into multilateral disarmament processes, whether through treaties such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions or through work in the area of cybersecurity, to mention just a few examples.

Mr. President, many initiatives have been taken in recent years to strengthen the participation of women or to take account of the gender dimension in disarmament processes. While this progress is to be welcomed, much remains to be done. I would like to point out three areas on which future efforts should be focused. First, I would like to thank the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for its work and studies on the issue of participation in disarmament forums. It will be important to continue these studies, as they provide us with the data and evidence that guide the efforts we need to make to overcome the challenge of women's underrepresentation.

Secondly, a gender approach should be more systematically integrated into the various disarmament processes and treaties. In this context, it would be appropriate to build on the positive experience gained in some areas, such as in the development of gender-sensitive assistance for mine victims, and to see if and how this experience could be applied to other areas.

Lastly, it would be useful to create and build on synergies with initiatives in related areas. The Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network, which Switzerland will co-chair with South Africa in 2022, may provide some guidance in this regard. As the recent United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research study “Connecting the Dots” points out, it could be timely to forge closer links between disarmament programmes and the women, peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you. I now give the floor to the delegation of South Africa.

Mr. September (South Africa): Mr. President, it is our firm conviction that women should play an active role in contributing to inclusive peace, as well as State-building processes, which can significantly contribute to lasting peace, stability and prosperity. The selection of this topic for the thematic discussion confirms not only the significance of the women and peace and security agenda, but also our shared commitment to the issue. Although some progress has been made, the myriad and complex conflicts in the world underscore the need to reinforce the implementation of that agenda.

We remain concerned about the barriers that persist to the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security; the frequent underrepresentation of women in many formal processes and bodies related to the maintenance of international peace and security; the relatively low number of women in senior positions in political, peace and security-related national, regional and international institutions; the lack of adequate gender-sensitive humanitarian responses and support for women in leadership roles in these settings; insufficient financing for the women and peace and security agenda; and the resulting detrimental impact on the maintenance of international peace and security. It is for this reason that Ambassador Nkosi has put himself forward as a gender champion in the area of disarmament.

Mr. President, from a South African perspective, the women and peace and security agenda is a means for women to mediate in conflict situations as an essential component in ending the use of force as a means of settling disputes. South Africa has been a proponent of the women and peace and security agenda since its inception, and we remain committed to its implementation. It will contribute to silencing the guns across the world and, importantly, towards saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

The women and peace and security agenda was arguably one of South Africa’s most visible priorities during its two terms on the Security Council: South Africa led the negotiations on resolution 2493 (2019) in October 2019, the first month of its presidency. That resolution asked Member States to provide further information on the progress achieved and setbacks sustained in implementing the women and peace and security agenda, pushing them to take stronger practical steps to improve the position of women. One of our focus areas in the Council was the push for implementation and the accountability of Member States.

While implementation of the resolution in South Africa was initially driven by our Department of International Relations and Cooperation, other sectors of society were involved in developing the implementation plan. The aim was to produce a strategy that would acknowledge the country’s foreign policy priority as well as the daily needs of and threats to women. Beyond international relations, the process brought together departments that focus on defence, women, children and persons with disabilities. A range of academics, women’s rights activists, policymakers and civil society also participated. It was an important lesson in developing inclusive and accountable foreign policy.

Mr. President, the severe and unyielding impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on countries globally has disrupted daily life and the way of life and work as we know it. We recognize that the pandemic continues to compound our challenges and will cause governments to refocus their agendas on a collective response to combating it. This will not only require increased health expenditure, but also an approach based on human security; and that we all put women, peace and security at the centre of that approach.

This will mean cutting public expenditure in some sectors. We hope that those cuts will be in the area that contributes largely to global insecurity, which is expenditure on arms programmes, especially modernization programmes of nuclear weapons.

In conclusion, Mr. President, evidence is now emerging of the disproportionate effect of ionizing radiation, in addition to other immediate and long-term humanitarian and environmental consequences of the use and testing of nuclear weapons on women and children. We believe, therefore, that the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons and concrete disarmament measures will be the greatest contribution that we practitioners of disarmament diplomacy can make to advancing the cause of women.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the South African delegation for its statement. We now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Mr. President, Japan is strongly committed to gender equality and has established its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The equal participation of women and men in the field of peace and security is of crucial importance. Japan has been promoting women's participation in various activities relating to disarmament and non-proliferation, and has made continuous efforts to assist women in countries affected by and vulnerable to conflicts. For example, Japan is proud of having Ms. Kazuko Hikawa, a professor at Osaka Jogakuin University, as an expert on the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification, which is scheduled to meet in November this year.

General Assembly resolution 75/71 on joint courses of action and future-oriented dialogue towards a world without nuclear weapons, which Japan submitted last year and which was adopted with 150 votes in favour, reaffirms "that the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men is one of the essential factors for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security".

Japan will continue, in cooperation with civil society, to promote concrete actions to enhance women's participation and role in the field of peace, security, disarmament and non-proliferation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Many thanks to the Ambassador of Japan for his statement. Next, we give the floor to the Ambassador of Indonesia.

Ms. Werdaningtyas (Indonesia) (*via video link*): Mr. President, Indonesia has always attached great importance to the promotion of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the spheres of peace and security. We have many first-hand experiences of how the participation of women enables us to develop inclusive and more sustainable policies and, more importantly, how it helps us create impactful action on the ground. Expanding access for women in the development of policies and decision-making is not an easy task, particularly in sectors where women are often both overlooked and, at the same time, suffer a disproportionate and negative impact, such as in the peace and security spheres.

This is why Indonesia continues to strengthen its national legal and institutional framework, including in areas related to peace and security, for example, by developing and maintaining national development planning and a related budget that are gender responsive; by establishing its National Action Plan for the protection and empowerment of women and children in social conflict; and integrating the element of women's empowerment into the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism. Beyond that, Indonesia has also started various initiatives related to women and peace and security in our region, for instance, spearheading the South-East Asian Network of Women Peace Negotiators and Mediators; we also launched the Women for Peace Registry of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

At the global level, Indonesia is working with others to increase the number and the capacity of our female United Nations peacekeepers. In the past four years, for example, we have doubled the number of female personnel deployed to United Nations peacekeeping operations from 82 in 2007 to 190 in January 2021.

Mr. President, along the same lines, we believe that we must strengthen the gender perspective in the areas of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. We recognize

that much progress has been made, such as the growing representation of women in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy, and the increasing effort to incorporate gender provisions in the multilateral framework of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Nevertheless, women continue to be underrepresented in these sectors and more needs to be done. As many speakers before me have underscored, if we want to accelerate progress, we need targeted action, which involves, first, creating a conducive environment, including by strengthening and supporting the regulatory, institutional and financial framework at all levels. In this context, we believe that the technical linguistic update of our rules of procedure is more relevant than ever.

Second, we must promote and expand access for women to training and capacity-building in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament programmes. And, third, we need to establish platforms and networks for women to participate in and contribute to the arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agenda.

Mr. President, we need to collectively double our efforts in strengthening the gender perspective within the disarmament agenda. I believe that diverse perspectives, including those of women, can bring new insight and improve the functioning of this Conference, which has for too long been in stalemate.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Austria.

Ms. Tichy-Fisslberger (Austria): Distinguished colleagues, as a member of the Geneva International Gender Champions, I have committed myself to empowering women and encouraging them to be more assertive about their capabilities. It is a well documented fact that more diverse compositions of negotiating delegations, for example, achieve better results in substance, impact and implementation.

The first international agreement promoting gender equality was the Charter of the United Nations itself. Article 8 specifies that the United Nations shall place no restriction on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.

The fact that, 76 years later, a body like this one, which has the important task of negotiating multilateral disarmament treaties, cannot agree on a simple technical update to reflect this right in the English language version of its rules of procedure, despite weeks of consultations initiated more than a year and a half ago, raises serious questions. Engaging in a politicized debate on this non-substantive technical issue already agreed 76 years ago has an impact on the very credibility of this body.

Mr. President, in 1903, Marie Curie was the first female winner of a Nobel Prize: the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences awarded the prize to her and her husband, Pierre Curie, in recognition of the extraordinary services rendered by their joint research on the radiation phenomena. Remarkably, Marie Curie is still one of only two persons ever awarded the Nobel Prize in two separate scientific fields. Jointly with her husband, she discovered the chemical elements polonium and radium. She coined the word radioactive. Many of her scientific achievements laid the ground for nuclear research, with all the benefits it brought to the world.

Today, the weaponization of nuclear energy remains the focus of the Conference on Disarmament's agenda: nuclear disarmament. Only one year after her first Nobel Prize, Marie Curie was starting to experience health challenges. It soon became clear that this was the consequence of radiation exposure – radiation-induced cancer. That phenomenon, also referred to as ionizing radiation, is still today a core element of concern in respect of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear explosions.

Meanwhile, the disproportionate effects of ionizing radiation on women are well documented scientifically. A woman is at a significantly greater risk of suffering and dying from radiation-induced cancer than a man who gets the same dose of ionizing radiation. Studies by the United States National Academy of Sciences estimated the risk of cancer incidence and death to be at least 50 per cent higher for women than for men. Radiation harm

includes not only cancer and leukaemia, but also negative impacts on immunity, reduced fertility and birth defects, including heart defects and mutations.

Preventing harm caused by radiation is of relevance for generations. The environmental impact of radiation at nuclear test sites and at nuclear accident sites is receiving more and more attention and continues to have consequences for the humans living in the contaminated area.

When it comes to biological weapons, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) has rightly highlighted the variation in levels of susceptibility between men and women to some diseases, as well as sex-specific problems in reproductive health, including miscarriages and male infertility.

In the civilian domain, this recognition is a long-standing element of effective disease treatment, yet this dimension is barely heard of in the Biological Weapons Convention. Knowledge about these differences has the potential to lead to more effective policy responses, and it might be beneficial to take advantage of this standard scientific knowledge in our biological weapons deliberations. Awareness of sex-specific differences and gender dynamics can facilitate effective assistance, as UNIDIR has further highlighted.

Much experience has been gathered on the gendered humanitarian effects of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, including the identification of groups at particularly high risk. Young boys, due to their societal role, are disproportionately at risk of suffering harm from cluster munitions. This knowledge helps to design more efficient mine risk awareness programmes.

We commend the States parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention for building on the increasing knowledge of the gendered impact of these weapons, as recognized in, inter alia, the Convention's Oslo Action Plan.

Mr. President, applying a gender lens to our disarmament efforts leads to more informed, and thus more effective, decisions and better results. This gender lens comprises two core elements: first, equal participation of men and women in crafting and implementing the agreements; and, second, understanding of the gender- and sex-sensitive effects of specific weapons. The gender lens is a reinforcement for effective progress on substance. Discussing gender questions in the absence of substantive work yields little tangible results.

We therefore encourage everyone to recognize the relevance of both equal participation and the gender-sensitive effects of our work so as to enhance the quality of our disarmament and non-proliferation outcomes and deliberations.

In closing, Mr. President, allow me to commend UNIDIR for its long-standing efforts in documenting current practice in respect of the gender-related aspects of disarmament and for providing helpful, actionable recommendations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, mainstreaming the gender perspectives in the women and peace and security agenda is a *sine qua non* for lasting peace and security. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, while underlining the critical role of women's equal participation and full involvement in efforts towards the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, also highlights the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. It recognizes women as agents integral to achieving peace, stability and security.

Today, the proliferation of armed conflicts and their evolving nature involving armed non-State actors have placed women and girls in war-torn, fragile and humanitarian contexts at great risk of being subjected to violence and discrimination. Addressing such complex challenges requires close cooperation, collaboration and coordination between Member States and other relevant stakeholders across multiple forums and in a consistent manner.

Mr. President, India attaches high importance to promoting gender equality and the meaningful participation and agency of women in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament forums. As we can all appreciate, this is a cross-cutting issue with a

multisectoral and multi-stakeholder dimension and requires the active participation of all Member States.

India has been an active participant in the comprehensive deliberations on women-related issues at the various United Nations bodies. It has also been among the major contributors towards the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) since its inception. India has a long-standing commitment to promoting women's participation and leadership in international security matters. Many of our women diplomats have made significant contributions as leaders and decision makers in various fields of international security, including in this very Conference on Disarmament as permanent representatives of India. More recently, India had the unique distinction of having women as our Ministers of both External Affairs and Defence. India also has a number of distinguished women in leadership roles in various ministries, including our current Minister of State for External Affairs, Ms. Meenakashi Lekhi.

Mr. President, India works closely with UN-Women, United Nations peacekeeping operations and other relevant United Nations agencies to advance the role and participation of women in matters relating to international security. The all-female formed police unit that India contributed to the United Nations mission in Liberia was the first-ever women-only contingent in the history of United Nations peacekeeping and was lauded as a role model when the mission was wound up in March 2018.

It is important to recognize the need to increase and institutionalize the involvement of women, not only in conflict prevention and resolution but also in various processes and forums related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. This requires not only normative advice, but capacity-building and institution-building on the ground. In this context, India actively encourages the participation of women diplomats in its Annual Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship Programme, launched in 2019. India will follow the same approach in its Disarmament for Youth initiative, through outreach and engagement of young women in various programmes. India has hosted specialized courses for women military officers in partnership with UN-Women at the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping in New Delhi. India has also taken the lead in hosting specialized training courses for peacekeepers on sexual violence in armed conflict situations.

Mr. President, India is pleased to note various efforts by Member States to mainstream gender perspectives and promote equal participation of women in various disarmament and non-proliferation forums and instruments. My country supports the First Committee resolutions and group of governmental experts reports in which the international community is urged to work towards achieving this aim.

The Conference on Disarmament, for its part, has also taken a modest, yet significant, step by trying to mainstream gender perspectives in its rules of procedure. India supported the initiatives of the distinguished Australian and Canadian presidencies regarding technical updates to the rules of procedure to make them gender inclusive and remains optimistic that the language used in the rules of procedure will indeed reflect the equality of women and men in the near future.

Mr. President, India stands ready to contribute to further international efforts in respect of both the normative and the practical aspects of promoting women's participation and role in disarmament and international security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador for his statement. I now invite the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to take the floor.

Mr. Lim Sang-Beom (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, the Republic of Korea advocates gender mainstreaming in major national policy areas in order to broaden the women and peace and security agenda in peacebuilding and sustainable development. Against this backdrop, it aligns itself with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and subsequent resolutions.

In April of this year, the Republic of Korea submitted its third national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), in which concrete strategies and actions are identified towards achieving two objectives. The first is the expansion of women's participation in the areas of national defence, foreign affairs, security, peace and

public safety. The second is the building of good governance regarding the women and peace and security agenda. In the same spirit, we welcome and support the emphasis that the Secretary-General places on ensuring the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament in his Agenda for Disarmament.

In the Agenda, the Secretary-General also places an emphasis on the young generation as the ultimate force for change. Taking these two aspects very seriously, the Republic of Korea tabled the draft that was subsequently adopted as General Assembly resolution 74/64 (2019) on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation in 2019. And the issue of gender equality has been one of the major elements in our subsequent activities to empower, educate and engage youth in the disarmament and non-proliferation field. The Youth Forum on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, co-hosted by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea in June 2021 is a meaningful example of those activities. The Republic of Korea has also been actively participating in other efforts throughout the United Nations system, including in the framework of the First Committee of the General Assembly.

In Geneva, as part of the practical measures to translate our commitment into reality, our head of mission has joined the International Gender Champions, and his commitment, including through the International Gender Champions Panel Parity Pledge, is being put into practice in the whole scope of the activities and engagements of the mission.

Mr. President, last but not least, my delegation would once again like to convey the view that it is indeed regrettable that, despite strong support from the majority of members of this forum, we were not able to reach consensus on the efforts in the Conference on Disarmament with regard to the technical update of the rules of procedure, even though the update aimed at nothing more than to better reflect gender neutrality. We do, however, trust that the profound efforts made this year will not be wasted and will be continued in the coming sessions. We look forward to our collective endeavours bearing fruit.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Ireland.

Mr. Walsh (Ireland): Mr. President, Ireland has long been a champion of the women and peace and security agenda and an advocate for issues of gender and disarmament. The integration of gender perspectives is a cross-cutting horizontal priority in all areas of Irish foreign policy. This is reflected in our successive national action plans on women, peace and security. For Ireland, the issue of women and security has always resonated deeply, not least given our lived experience of women's role in the Northern Ireland peace process; and we have consistently demonstrated our commitment to making the ground-breaking vision of the women and peace and security agenda a reality.

Although 20 years have passed since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, the arms control community has only very recently begun to discuss gender-sensitive approaches to weapons regulation and disarmament measures. Additionally, in many respects, the women and peace and security framework still lacks a systematic approach to issues of disarmament and arms control. As we heard from all the distinguished panellists, disarmament continues to lag behind other international domains in the progress achieved. National delegations remain male-dominated and discussions on gender-related issues are often contentious. We witnessed evidence of this fact at the Conference on Disarmament this year, when a small but significant proposal to make the rules of procedure for this Conference gender neutral was blocked by a small number of States. My delegation would like to reiterate our full support for that proposal and express the sincere hope that it can be revisited in the future.

Mr. President, it is encouraging that a growing number of States are increasingly exploring opportunities to break down gender barriers in the fields of disarmament and international security. As Co-Chair of the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, Ireland has sought to highlight the importance of women's participation and role in international security and advocate for their greater inclusion. We have provided practical suggestions for increasing the participation and decision-making of women in various disarmament forums. In particular, I would like to draw your attention to the Group's

Gender and Disarmament Resource Pack for multilateral practitioners which contains several useful suggestions on ways in which delegations may address the current imbalance.

The Disarmament Impact Group has also produced fact sheets on gender in specific treaties and conventions. To launch one of these fact sheets in June, Ireland moderated an interactive discussion on the relevance of gender perspectives to the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention. The conversation with panellists ranged from recent initiatives to improve women's meaningful participation in the Convention to research on sex-specific and gendered impacts of biological weapons. There are also some notable successes in recent years in integrating gender perspectives into multilateral instruments. The adoption in 2013 of the Arms Trade Treaty, which includes strong provisions on gender-based violence, and the positive collaboration between States parties and non-governmental organizations in creating the informal gender working group for the Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention and the 2020 Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions are excellent examples of integrating gender perspectives and boosting the participation of women.

Additionally, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons recognizes the need for the equal, full and effective participation of women and men for sustainable peace and security. The Treaty makes an explicit commitment to strengthen the participation of women in nuclear disarmament and, as very eloquently noted by the distinguished Ambassador of Austria, it recognizes the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women and girls. In the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference, Ireland has engaged on gender with determination and commitment, submitting national working papers on the role of gender in the Treaty. Alongside Australia, Canada, Namibia, Sweden and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), we have submitted papers on improving gender equality and diversity in the NPT review process and integrating gender perspectives in the implementation of the Treaty.

Much greater involvement of all States is necessary for that progress to continue. The evidence is compelling in this regard. Ireland has supported research, through UNIDIR, on gender representation in multilateral disarmament forums, which shows clearly that, despite improvements over time, women are still underrepresented in almost all multilateral forums. As Ms. Delacroix expertly highlighted in her presentation today, this is particularly the case in forums concerning security issues and disarmament.

The problems are further reflected in a recent paper by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), supported by Ireland, on examining the gender dynamics of the life cycle of ammunition management. This paper highlighted that the chronic underrepresentation of women is impacting gender parity efforts in the weapons and ammunition management sector and resulting gaps in policy implementation.

Mr. President, while individual efforts and awareness-raising on issues related to women and international security are vital, they must be followed through with action. We call on States to ensure gender parity in their delegations and proactively seek out ways to improve gender outcomes. Sponsorship programmes should encourage balanced delegations wherever possible.

It is also important to stress that women's participation should be full, equal and meaningful. While it is absolutely necessary, increasing the number of women in the room is really only the first step. There must be a genuine integration of arms control and disarmament issues into the women and peace and security agenda for real change to take effect. Breaking down the silos will not be an easy task, and we are faced with deeply rooted social, political and cultural barriers to progress that will take a concerted effort to remove. In practical terms, States can make a start by placing a greater focus on disarmament- and arms control-related issues in national action plans on implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. To date, only one third of national action plans address arms control and disarmament measures and yet these are topics on which there is an enormous amount of multilateral activity and engagement directly related to the objectives of the women and peace and security agenda. Integrating arms control issues into these plans in a holistic way would move women's political participation and gender issues beyond tokenism and into practical action.

Finally, Mr. President, the development, transfer and use of weapons enable and drive the conflicts and violence which disproportionately impact women and girls. My delegation is firmly of the view that, if we want to reduce the impact of armed violence on women and girls and achieve the goals of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the integration of gender perspectives into disarmament and non-proliferation, including here at the Conference on Disarmament, is essential.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of Ireland and give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Pakistan.

Mr. Chaudhary (Pakistan): Mr. President, the Member States of the United Nations have championed the cause of the gender dimensions of arms control through both Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and the biennial General Assembly resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, adopted once again in 2020. Pakistan continues to support these initiatives as complementary steps in advancing the international peace and arms control agenda.

Mr. President, Pakistan, too, has made a modest contribution to amplifying the importance of women's participation and their role in the arena of international security. During our presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in May 2016, our delegation organized an open-ended plenary session under the theme "Women and disarmament". This was done in line with Pakistan's full support for the effective and enhanced participation of women in peace and security and disarmament discussions and decision-making processes.

Mr. President, nationally, Pakistan has taken several steps to incorporate a gender perspective in peace, security, arms control and related subjects. Pakistan has a proud tradition of woman leaders in this area. Women have served as Prime Minister, Speaker, National Assembly and Foreign Minister. Women make up one third of our parliament. Our women have led policy institutions addressing security and arms control, including as foreign secretary and federal and provincial secretaries. Women ambassadors have represented Pakistan in New York, at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague and, of course, here in Geneva. All of them have been active participants in the discourse on security and disarmament. We currently have women ambassadors and diplomats in various capitals all over the globe. We have over six dozen women peacekeepers in the United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world today. Pakistani women continue to be part of the Pakistani Armed Forces, not only as auxiliary staff, but in combat roles, including as fighter pilots. This underlines the commitment of the country's Armed Forces to promoting equal opportunity for our women as well.

Yet, Mr. President, as has been noted before, despite progress made internationally and nationally, much remains to be done to achieve the goal of gender equality and the inclusion of a diverse perspective in arms control deliberations, negotiations and outcomes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished delegate, for your statement. We now invite the delegate of Canada to take the floor.

Mr. Fetz (Canada): Mr. President, gender equality is a human right. Women's participation in international security is vital to achieving better results in disarmament and arms control and in international security more generally. Updating the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament to make them gender inclusive would have been an important symbolic step. The lack of consensus was disappointing and reflects the fact that we have a gender problem in the Conference on Disarmament – but change is inevitable.

The women and peace and security agenda underpins my country's work on non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control, including addressing weapons of mass destruction. Canada has been working alongside other Member States and international organizations to bring this issue to the forefront of the international, non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament agenda. Ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women is critical if we want to tackle the challenging issues we face and ensure that we can work towards solutions that benefit everyone. Since 2017, we have included specific targets dedicated to policy and programming on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament in our national action plan on women, peace and security.

Mr. President, allow me to highlight a few concrete examples of our engagement on gender and disarmament. In the United Nations system, Canada is a champion of action 36 of the Secretary-General's implementation plan for the Agenda for Disarmament, on the full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes. In this context, we collaborate with and, until recently, co-chaired, the Geneva-based International Gender Champion's Disarmament Impact Group, which advocates for gender equality across the range of Geneva-based disarmament organizations, treaties and conventions. In 2019, the Impact Group published the Gender and Disarmament Resource Pack for multilateral practitioners, which contains key information on the relevance of gender perspectives and practical ideas to support diplomats in applying a gender lens to arms control and disarmament; as well as promoting gender equality and improving women's meaningful participation and agency in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. We strongly recommend this useful document to all delegations.

Canada applies the principles and guidelines of this document in our work in the First Committee of the General Assembly. In our annual review of all resolutions in that forum, we added a methodological analysis to allow us to better see the resolutions that are being proposed, taking into account gender dynamics and including strong language to that effect. In 2020, 25 per cent of all resolutions and decisions adopted in the First Committee contained new or enhanced gender language. This year, we look forward to seeing inclusive resolutions that take into account the gender dimensions of international security and we stand ready to collaborate with other delegations in this regard. Domestically, through programmes such as the Weapons Threat Reduction Programme, Canada's primary programming vehicle to address international threats posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we are systematically integrating a gender-responsive approach to international assistance initiatives. This approach has allowed us to ensure that our programming is addressing the right problems and providing solutions that work for everyone.

(spoke in French)

In 2019, my country's Weapons Threat Reduction Program began funding the secretariats of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, in order to support the participation of women and girls in the full range of collective mine actions and to encourage them to emerge as leading actors and agents of peace in proceedings and side events.

Canada is pleased to see that many of the gender equality measures in the Oslo Action Plan were negotiated at the most recent Review Conference. Our Weapons Threat Reduction Program also supports the World Institute for Nuclear Security (WINS) by providing scholarships for women to attend the WINS Academy and obtain certification in nuclear security management. The aims of this certification are to endorse competencies in line with international standards, to build confidence and to help women advance their careers in a field where they make up fewer than 20 per cent of the workforce. As has been demonstrated in all occupational sectors, a more inclusive workplace performs better, and we strongly believe that we all have a stake in getting more women to work in nuclear safety.

We also support the Gender and Disarmament Programme being carried out by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. Our partnership with the Institute will enable Member States and multilateral actors to integrate gender considerations into conventional arms control and disarmament, through research on women's participation and the development of guidance for Member States on integrating gender frameworks into conventional arms control. As we continue our efforts and build on the successes we have achieved in integrating gender considerations into conventional arms control, we need to take stock and address the more systematic challenges that we face in the area of control of weapons of mass destruction, where women remain underrepresented.

I thank Chile once again for convening this plenary session on this important topic and assure you of Canada's continued support for a more equal and peaceful world.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: Thank you very much, distinguished delegate. We now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Mr. President, the women and peace and security agenda promotes the empowerment of women and girls in efforts to prevent, reduce and transition from armed conflict and respect for women's and girls' human rights in conflict. I am proud to say that the United Kingdom is the pen holder on this issue at the Security Council and, indeed, led the first Security Council resolution on women, peace and security – the famous Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Justly referred to as a landmark resolution, it was the first time that the Security Council explicitly acknowledged the different needs, possibilities and vulnerabilities of women, men, girls and boys in conflict-affected situations. In it, the Security Council called on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse in situations of armed conflict; and it stressed the need to ensure that women need to be able to participate fully and meaningfully in all aspects of conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Evidence shows that implementation of the women and peace and security agenda has a direct impact on securing stability and sustainable peace and, therefore, of reducing security threats.

The United Kingdom implements the agenda through our fourth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, covering the period 2018 to 2022, which sets out seven strategic outcomes aligned with the four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda of participation, prevention, protection and relief and recovery. While we have, perhaps, been somewhat slow to make the connection, it is clear that our work in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation is directly or indirectly relevant to many of these outcomes.

The United Kingdom has spoken in other forums of the importance of putting the gender perspective at the heart of action against landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, for example, which speaks to strategic outcome 4 of the National Action Plan, on humanitarian response. Tackling the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons can have a major impact on combating gender-based violence, as we have heard this afternoon; that is our strategic outcome 3.

We need to do more to draw the explicit links between our work on disarmament and on women and peace and security, by “Connecting the Dots” to quote the title of last year's important study by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, which the United Kingdom was pleased to co-fund.

Another area is increasing women's meaningful and representative participation and leadership in decision-making processes – which is strategic outcome 1 in our National Action Plan.

Much attention has been paid in recent years to achieving gender parity in international disarmament discussions, and we welcome the progress that has been made in this area. However, as we have heard, there is a long way to go. It is pleasing to see an explicit call for gender balance in the mandates of the groups of governmental experts, for example. And, indeed, the United Kingdom has incorporated language to this effect in General Assembly resolution 75/36 on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. Important though it is to ensure balance and diversity among the people in the room, that is not sufficient: the policymaking processes back in capitals that generate our positions and instructions also need to ensure meaningful inclusion and participation of as wide a range of perspectives as possible.

In recognition of this, our National Security Council has established a national security community culture, diversity and inclusion programme and appointed the Foreign Office Director for Defence and International Security, Samantha Job, as the National Security Community's senior gender champion.

It is in this context that the proposal to amend the rules of procedure of this body to make them gender-inclusive is so important. We can talk all we want about the importance of non-discrimination or claim that there is no discrimination in the Conference on Disarmament, but there is and there will continue to be, so long as there is an assumption built into the very text of the rules of procedure of the Conference that only men would assume the presidency or the role of its Secretary-General. As diplomats know, language matters.

Finally, Mr. President, let me say a word about the work the United Kingdom has done to promote gender equality in its current capacity as Chair of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Material of Mass Destruction. At the plenary session of the Global Partnership Working Group in June 2021, the United Kingdom and Canada introduced a joint paper on strengthening equality in global partnership activities, supported by presentations from UNIDIR and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons highlighting their work on research, analysis and mainstreaming of gender equality. Among a number of recommendations for tangible action, the Working Group agreed to introduce gender equality requirements into the Global Partnership programming process. Over the rest of our term as Chair, the United Kingdom will investigate further a concept for analysis of gender equality within the sphere of countering weapons of mass destruction, the development of appropriate guidance and tools and support for a wider diversity and inclusion initiative in the longer term to consider other factors such as disability and race. This agenda matters, Mr. President, and the United Kingdom will continue to engage to learn and to contribute in the years to come.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your statement, Ambassador. We now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Bondarev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I should like to thank the Chilean presidency for organizing today's meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on the participation and role of women in addressing international security issues, especially in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. We are grateful to the invited speakers for covering a number of important points. They have certainly given us food for thought about ensuring and further improving gender equality in the area being addressed by the Conference on Disarmament.

We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres, and his High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu, to bring gender inequality to the attention of the international community. We see a positive trend in the increasing involvement of women in considering the current topics on the disarmament agenda. The active participation of women in forums such as ours has long been a reality. And this development is fully consistent with the fundamental principles of the United Nations, which govern the operation of all international structures and platforms dealing with international security.

The Russian Federation not only supports this trend but also contributes to its development. The Russian Federation has consistently advocated the observance of equal rights for men and women in all spheres of life, including disarmament. We are proud to say that in our diplomatic service, for example, the number of women is almost equal to the number of men.

The role of women in foreign policy, including arms control, continues to grow steadily. This is an objective reality that can only be welcomed.

The importance of equal participation of both sexes in disarmament activities is emphasized in the most recent General Assembly resolution 75/48 on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Its adoption without a vote reflects the unanimous position of all States Members of the United Nations on this issue. This resolution outlines ways in which Member States should move forward in ensuring respect for women's rights, combating gender-based armed violence, raising women's awareness of their rights and how to protect them, including in situations of armed conflict.

For our part, we are open to cooperation with all interested States and organizations on all these issues.

However, we must not forget a fundamental point, which is unfortunately often overlooked in discussions of gender equality and gender balance. The main criteria for the selection of personnel should be not sex or gender but the professionalism and competence of specific people. This is essential for constructive and comprehensive dialogue, especially in such a complex and sensitive area as international security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished delegate, for your statement. We now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of China.

Ms. Ma Ying (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, I am pleased to participate in this plenary session which you have organized on the theme of the role of women in international security. I have listened carefully to the presentations made by the speakers and the delegates who have just spoken, and I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of my own views.

For as long as I can remember, I have never felt any form of discrimination as a woman in China. There is a Chinese saying that is well known to women and children: “Women can hold up half the sky”. Equality between men and women is a basic national policy in China. Chinese women have always been an important force for national development and social progress.

In the diplomatic community, China now has nearly 40 female ambassadors or consuls general, with the proportion of women in its diplomatic corps approaching 40 per cent. China is an important force in the active promotion of the cause of women around the world. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 remains the guiding document for global gender equality. In 2015, China and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women jointly hosted the Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Empowerment, which injected new impetus into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A series of cooperation initiatives put forward by China have also been fully implemented.

In the field of global security, Chinese women have not only never been absent, but have all along been playing an active and important role. Over the past 30 years, nearly 1,000 Chinese women have participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The Chinese infantry battalion in South Sudan has a female combat squad, and Mao Ping, the first female military commander to be sent on a peacekeeping mission, was honoured with an “Outstanding Woman Award” by the Government of Lebanon.

Chinese women have continuously contributed their wisdom to the cause of international and multilateral arms control and disarmament. Since the establishment of the Department of Arms Control under the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1997, many female diplomats have served as department heads, section chiefs and deputy section chiefs, with responsibilities in such important areas as the nuclear, biological, outer space, anti-missile and cyber fields.

There is an even greater presence of academic and scientific women experts working on international security and arms control in China. Major General Yao Yunzhu of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences has been active in the field of international-security and arms-control academic exchanges for many years. Earlier this year, she was also invited to participate directly in the thematic discussions of the United Nations Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, actively contributing to the conclusion of the report submitted to Secretary-General Guterres.

Mr. President, it has been more than two years since I came to Geneva as a member of the Chinese delegation to the Conference on Disarmament, and it has been a privilege to work with many outstanding women colleagues. Whether at the rostrum or at the delegates’ table, whether in front of the microphone or behind the delegates, the diplomatic skills and professionalism displayed by these women colleagues have left a lasting impression on all their colleagues in the Conference.

My personal feeling is that women can and should play a more unique and important role in the field of international security and arms control, including in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Especially against the backdrop of the current profound changes in the international security landscape, increasing the participation of women will impart new vitality and impetus to carrying forward work in the field of international security, and will bring calmer and more rational, impartial, objective, patient and pragmatic thinking to multilateral arms control and disarmament.

The equal participation of women in international affairs further highlights the important principle of equality and mutual respect in international relations and will help to ensure its effective implementation.

Before I conclude my remarks today, I would also like to say to my women colleagues here that the equal participation of women in international security and arms control and in the work of the Conference on Disarmament should be seen as an objective fact, like our innate beauty and social position, which has existed and will continue to exist as long, as surely and as naturally as Lake Geneva and the Palais des Nations. We should have as much confidence in this as we have in ourselves. What we need to do is to make a unique and greater contribution to the cause of multilateralism and international security, arms control and disarmament through our efforts. The world and the times need such a contribution and only we can make it, so let's do it together!

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, distinguished delegate. We give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Mexico.

Ms. Gómez Robledo Sánchez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to salute you for having included the issue of women and peace and security on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. We consider this discussion to be both timely and essential, as we need to create spaces to hold frank dialogues and share concrete ideas in order to ensure an adequate gender perspective in the fields of international peace and security, with a particular focus on disarmament, which is the mandate of our Conference.

We would like to acknowledge all the speakers at this meeting, since they allow us to establish a broad and diverse vision of how to approach the topic of gender and disarmament. Undersecretaries Valdivia Torres and Jenkins demonstrated their countries' firm commitment to ensuring the full participation of women in the fields of peace and security, and we are grateful to them for sharing the specific policies that are being put in place to make this a reality.

For her part, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu, highlighted the importance of taking the voice of women into account in a world where, owing to political manoeuvring, disarmament architecture is being eroded and instability is on the rise. We acknowledge the measures being taken by the United Nations, in line with the commitment shown by the Secretary-General himself. My delegation appreciates the attendance of Ms. Tatiana Valovaya at this meeting, which demonstrates the importance she attaches to this item of the disarmament agenda.

Mr. President, during its membership of the Security Council, and in line with our feminist foreign policy, Mexico has assumed the leadership of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, which it co-chairs with Ireland. It is thereby promoting, in a systematic and cross-cutting manner, the incorporation of the gender perspective into the Security Council's work. Another example of my delegation's commitment to the issue is our joint organization with France of the Generation Equality Forum, which was held last March and July in Mexico City and Paris. During the event, members of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action shared relevant thoughts on future approaches related to, among other topics, the meaningful participation of women in peace processes, women's leadership in the security and humanitarian sectors and the protection of women peacebuilders.

Mr. President, for my delegation, it cannot be denied that the gender perspective and disarmament are closely interrelated; excluding women from discussion and decision-making forums on disarmament and non-proliferation leads only to policies that fail to reflect the specific and differentiated needs and concerns of half the population. Women's participation in peace and security issues, and above all disarmament, is not only a matter of ensuring non-discrimination in those forums; it is vital for fostering specific proposals aimed at encouraging and enabling the broader participation of women and incorporating the gender perspective into the way in which these matters are addressed. The commitment must go from ensuring that the language used in regulations is the language of gender equality to the taking of effective measures by the presidency and States guaranteeing the real and substantive participation of women in all discussions and at all decision-making levels.

In this sense, we have to take a multidimensional approach to the subject. Firstly, we must take all measures to ensure the full and equal participation of women in processes related to disarmament and security, and particularly in decision-making roles, as endorsed by the Secretary-General in his Agenda for Disarmament and outlined in this session by Ms.

Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Equitable representation has undoubtedly improved on various panels, bodies, expert groups and boards, and the integration of the secretariat of this Conference into the management responsibilities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs is, of course, another notable development. However, we are still a long way off achieving gender parity, a goal set out in the Agenda for Disarmament.

We also salute the detailed and multifactorial work carried out by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) under its Gender and Disarmament Programme. The significant and extensive research it has conducted on the subject, outlined in the excellent presentation made at this meeting by Ms. Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, has allowed us to assess not only the progress made in recent years but also the structural obstacles to effective equality in the area of disarmament, demonstrating how it notoriously lags behind the other thematic pillars of the United Nations.

Secondly, the gender perspective provides new dimensions, approaches and solutions to the issue. It is necessary to listen to all voices and opinions, particularly those of women, in order to develop public policies and programmes on disarmament that are unaffected by the patriarchal stereotypes of international security.

Thirdly, the gender perspective is important for determining the impact of weapons and violence. It is particularly important to understand the different effects that arms control and disarmament have on each sector of the population. Men, women, boys and girls experience and are affected by weapons in different ways, both before and after conflicts. Detonations of nuclear weapons provide a clear example of this, as studies have confirmed that these detonations affect men and women differently. Women and girls are at a significantly greater risk of contracting and dying from radiation-induced cancer than men who receive the same dose of ionizing radiation. They are also at an increased risk of suffering other physical health deficits, such as reduced immunity, reduced fertility and impaired maternal health, which also have an impact on mental health.

As has already been mentioned, above all by Ambassador Villegas, certain important conventions can serve as examples of good practices from the perspective of gender and disarmament. Relevant examples include the Ottawa Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The latter, by recognizing the disproportionate effect that nuclear weapons have on women and girls and acknowledging the importance of including women in discussions on disarmament, provides a clear implementation framework that can serve as an example for other disarmament forums.

Mr. President, the importance of the gender perspective should be self-evident, since it is not possible to take support measures before, during and after a conflict without taking different perspectives into account. Mexico thanks the panel and calls for this issue to be addressed as a matter of course in all future discussions on the improvement and effectiveness of the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Our country also suggests that the Conference should embrace the substantive and constructive support of civil society, which must be invited to participate more actively in our discussions in order to strengthen the gender perspective in our debates.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that, by paying more attention to the link between gender and disarmament, we will be able to better understand persistent challenges and generate new ideas and proposals for progress on disarmament.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate and now give the floor to the delegate of Colombia.

Ms. Castillo Castro (Colombia) (*via video link, spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, as this is my delegation's first intervention since the start of your presidency, allow me to begin by thanking you and your team for the efforts you are making, above all in the preparation of a report that covers, to the extent possible, what has happened in the Conference on Disarmament this year.

With regard to today's topic, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Undersecretary Valdivia Torres, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu, and all the panellists who have shared with us their thoughts on gender

mainstreaming within the international disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control architecture.

For Colombia, the inclusion and active participation of women in these scenarios must be established as a priority and a commitment by all States. To this end, it is necessary to put in place mechanisms to ensure equality and the full and effective participation of women in all processes and actions that promote peace and security, at both the national and international levels. In that regard, Colombia is committed to improving gender equity and women's inclusion in the work of the State, including in positions of responsibility. To coordinate these efforts, the Presidential Advisory Council for Women's Equity has been working since 2017 to devise government policies aimed at promoting equity between women and men, driving the incorporation of the gender perspective into the plans and programmes of national and territorial public entities, and establishing mechanisms to monitor compliance with domestic legislation and international treaties and conventions related to women's equity and the gender perspective, among other functions.

Moreover, a Women's Equality Pact has been established within the framework of the National Development Plan 2018–2022, under which the country has continued to consolidate its strategies to promote the access of all women to resources, opportunities and positions of power.

In the particular case of the Colombian defence sector, work has been undertaken to create an environment of inclusion based on the core themes of prevention, protection and participation outlined in resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, thereby strengthening our work on this issue. A change to the internal regulations governing the forces of law and order has improved career prospects, creating equal opportunities for women in their professional lives. This is in keeping with the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) on reaffirming the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in peacebuilding and on the importance of their equal participation in efforts for the promotion of peace and security.

Similarly, at the multilateral level, Colombia has supported the inclusion of gender issues in different contexts and in resolutions on disarmament and non-proliferation. We have also welcomed initiatives that seek to increase the number of women in disarmament contexts. One such example is the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is designed to create an inclusive workforce composed of both men and women who contribute to global scientific and technological innovation in the nuclear field. In its 2020 edition, two Colombian women received fellowships to pursue their medical physics research in Spain and Colombia. We hope that such initiatives will continue and will grow so that more and more women can enhance the work being done on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Sustaining these efforts is a collective challenge in the face of the growing funding needs presented by other priorities of States. We hope that initiatives aimed at the greater inclusion of women and their full and effective participation will continue to be a priority, with special consideration given to their long-term impact.

We also hope that these discussions will continue to be held within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. As my delegation has pointed out at other meetings, the defence of equity and diversity is a permanent commitment and we are convinced that the actions available to us in this regard can truly transform the Conference on Disarmament and the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of Colombia. Distinguished colleagues, owing to time constraints, we have to suspend this thematic debate until the next formal meeting of the Conference, when we will hear the final statements and then begin reviewing a new revised version of the report, which we are currently working on.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.