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New York

President: Mr. Moretti (Brazil)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Spasse
China	Mr. Tian Bingxu
Ecuador	Ms. Mendez Gruezo
France	Mr. Leclerc
Gabon	Mr. Doumbeneny Ndzigina
Ghana	Ms. Barnor
Japan	Mr. Miyamoto
Malta	Ms. Micallef
Mozambique	Mr. Kumanga
Russian Federation.	Mr. Vorobiev
Switzerland	Mr. Anderegg
United Arab Emirates	Ms. Alrahma
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Andrews
United States of America.	Ms. Luquetta

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Women's participation in international peace and security: from theory to practice

Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2023/725)

Letter dated 3 October 2023 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2023/733)

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The meeting resumed at 4.30 p.m.

The President: Before we begin, I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Security Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. De Maesschalck (Belgium): At the outset, let me highlight that Belgium fully supports the statements of the European Union and the Group of Friends on Women, Peace and Security.

As the Secretary-General indicated in his report (S/2023/725), more than two decades into the implementation of the women peace and security agenda, the full and equal and meaningful participation of women in building and sustaining peace should be the norm, and not an afterthought. Unfortunately, progress in this field is slow, uneven and insufficient, and more concrete action is needed.

Allow me to elaborate on three points in that regard.

First, Belgium fully agrees that women's equal participation in decision-making and the realization of the human rights of women and girls are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Women's economic empowerment, equal access to quality education, the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights, the fight against negative stereotypes and many more concrete measures and actions are needed to eliminate each and every structural obstacle preventing women from participating in public life and decision-making. And vice versa, women are essential in decision-making on peace and conflict resolution to reach sustainable solutions for all.

Faced with a global rise in misogyny and anti-gender movements, Belgium calls on everyone to strengthen collaboration towards the realization of gender equality, both in peace and conflict settings, as a prerequisite and cornerstone for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

Secondly, the widespread attacks and reprisals against women human rights defenders in conflict settings continue, while also women journalists, women peace builders and women leaders — be it in conflict

settings or not — face harassment, threats, hate speech and disinformation. The significance, style, nature and impact of offline and online gender-based violence against women human rights defenders and women leaders mean that a much more strategic and considered action is required. In that regard, Belgium welcomes the strengthened support by United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions to women human rights defenders and calls for increased engagement with women leaders to amplify their message and increase their security.

Finally, my country regrets the investment and financing gaps preventing the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, as well as the lack of progress in the funding of local women's rights and women-led organizations. They are a driving force behind the women and peace and security agenda, play an essential role in the consolidation of sustainable peace and deserve all our recognition and support, which is why Belgium is proud to support the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, and calls on other countries to do the same.

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

Mrs. Güven (Türkiye): I thank the Brazilian presidency for convening this important debate as we mark the anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). That resolution has been a significant milestone, not only in highlighting women's participation in international peace and security but also in addressing the disproportionate impact of armed conflicts on women.

Thanks to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, there has been deeper awareness on the asymmetric impact of conflict on women, and yet women and girls in various parts of the world continue to suffer immensely as conflicts intensify.

The situation in the Middle East, which was addressed by the Security Council this week, as well as in Ukraine, Afghanistan, the Sudan and other regions, indicate that half the advances of the women and peace and security agenda can easily be rolled back. As the humanitarian toll in Gaza is rising, women and girls have been gravely impacted. Thousands have been either killed, widowed or displaced. Pregnant women in Gaza are unable to access safe hospitals.

We express our profound concern over the fact that sexual violence, a dreadful violation of human dignity, has become a regular tactic in times of armed conflict. And too often women are excluded from efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts.

I would like to highlight our priorities.

First of all, to ensure the success of the women and peace and security agenda, we need to address the core issues causing inequality and protect the human rights of women and girls. We also need to strengthen the global response to the horrific acts perpetrated against women and girls in conflict situations. We must promote the implementation of international humanitarian law under all conditions. Moreover, we must ensure women's full and meaningful participation as active agents in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. We welcome the fact that women's engagement in peacebuilding and peacekeeping will be central to the New Agenda for Peace.

Last but not least, it is crucial that we incorporate a gender perspective into the training of security personnel both at national and international levels.

Türkiye actively promotes the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in international platforms, including the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and NATO. Türkiye has contributed to the development of NATO policies in the context of the women and peace and security agenda.

We continue to implement gender-responsive training for security personnel deployed domestically, as well as in the NATO Mission Iraq, the Kosovo Force and other peacekeeping missions. We support the protection and empowerment of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

As the largest refugee hosting country, Türkiye continues to make every effort to support the women and girls who fled Syria. And we sincerely hope that this will enable Syrian women to participate in the rebuilding of post-conflict Syria.

In conclusion, I would like to express our gratitude to the women peacekeepers around the world for their service. My country will continue to advocate the women and peace and security agenda.

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

Mr. Zahneisen (Germany): First of all, let me thank Brazil for hosting this important open debate today and, of course, the briefers for their contributions.

Germany aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, as well as that to be delivered by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Feminist Foreign Policy Plus Group.

At the outset, let me briefly refer to the current crisis in the Middle East. Our thoughts are with all those who have fallen victim or have been hurt or traumatized by the terrorist attacks on Israel. Our thoughts are also with those suffering from the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Again, women and children are among those hardest hit, which underlines the importance of today's debate.

Twenty-three years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), there should really be no need to justify why women should be included in peace processes on an equal footing. The evidence is clear: peace processes without an adequate representation of women and marginalized groups are more likely to fail. It is therefore in everybody's self-interest to finally remove the obstacles to full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and girls in peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

However, the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2023/725) paints a bleak picture of the current state of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. One fact speaks for itself: of 18 peace agreements concluded in 2022, only one was signed by a representative of a women's organization. I think we need a radical shift now. As stated in the New Agenda for Peace, we must take concrete action to challenge and transform gender norms, value systems and institutional structures that perpetuate exclusion.

Improving inclusiveness is one of the core pillars of our feminist foreign policy. Germany wants quantitative and qualitative changes. We not only need peace processes to consider the needs of women and marginalized groups, but we also need women to participate at every stage of peace processes, including decision-making.

Germany remains a committed supporter of the women and peace and security agenda. Only last night, we pledged an additional \$10 million to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, of which we are already the largest donor.

In May, Germany co-hosted the Global Women's Forum for Peace and Humanitarian Action, where 90 civil society representatives from 29 countries jointly adopted the Berlin Declaration, containing very specific recommendations for action to strengthen the influence and capacity of women in peace and humanitarian action.

In the same vein, for many years Germany has supported regional women's networks like the African Women Leaders Network and the Unidas Women's Network.

The Security Council needs to ensure accountability for crimes specifically targeting women and children. In resolution 2467 (2019), the Council committed to more robust action against sexual violence in conflict. We urge the Council to take more action in that regard.

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

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

Mr. Sowa (Sierra Leone): Sierra Leone welcomes the convening of today's open debate on the women and peace and security agenda, under the theme "Women's participation in international peace and security: from theory to practice". We also thank the Secretary-General and the other briefers for the comprehensive insights on the women and peace and security agenda, with a specific call for concerted global efforts to do more for the effective implementation of related commitments.

Sierra Leone takes note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/725), which provides updates on the implementation of agenda over the past year and underscores the need for all stakeholders to redouble efforts to bring about radical shifts in women's meaningful participation in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

The women and peace and security agenda is an imperative for the Government of Sierra Leone and a priority, as we soon commence our tenure as an elected member of the Security Council for the 2024-2025 term. That is informed by our experience, as women in Sierra Leone were very instrumental in the effort that led to peace in Sierra Leone, following a decade of civil conflict. Women remained a key part of rebuilding the country at the end of the civil war 20 years ago.

Sierra Leone believes that conflicts, wherever they occur, continue to have debilitating consequences on the lives and livelihoods of women and girls. Therefore, the participation of women in peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts is compelling. In our national context and following the paradigm of women exerting influence on peace processes globally, the women peacebuilders in Sierra Leone from all economic and social structures came together with one resolve — to achieve lasting peace. The women in Sierra Leone created the Women's Forum, which became one of the chief advocates for the return to civilian rule and democratic elections in Sierra Leone.

The women's movement, which included Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace, joined the Women's Forum, with the primary objective of restoring peace in Sierra Leone. From advocacy in the national consultative conferences known as Bintumani 1 and 2, in 1996, to peace rallies, the women in Sierra Leone fought hard to achieve peace in the country, going from one peace process to the next.

As a result of women's intervention, a negotiated peace settlement became a respectable option that offered both Government and warring factions the opportunity to climb down from entrenched positions without loss of face. Much like women peacemakers and peacebuilders everywhere, their activism was relentless, even when they were barely supported, recognized or acknowledged.

The Women's Movement collective action that grew out of the civil war in Sierra Leone included taking the agenda of peace to the Government and warring factions. They shaped the women and peace and security agenda even before the Security Council had a name for it. The forum critically succeeded in opening up public discourse on contentious issues and articulating a politically non-partisan female perspective in the peace process.

The gender perspective, as described in the present context, had a major influence, during the political transition, on the transitional justice mechanisms. That led to the Head of State offering an apology to women victims of the 10-year civil war, as part of the truth and reconciliation process. With the apology, Sierra Leone took that important symbolic step as a fundamental reparation to recognize the wrong done to the women of Sierra Leone. The Special Court for Sierra Leone also focuses on sexual and gender-based violence,

owing in part to the gender perspective in the peace process, reinforcing the peace with justice paradigm. The Sierra Leone Special Court was, in fact, the first international criminal court to recognize the new crime against humanity of forced marriage as an additional inhumane act.

The voice that was regained by the women of Sierra Leone in the peace processes has been sustained in the post-conflict phase through peacebuilding, democratic governance and pursuit of sustainable development. With our first-hand experience of the importance of meaningful participation of women in peace processes, we came to realize that investing in women's participation for the peaceful resolution of conflict is critical to the maintenance of peace and security everywhere. Sierra Leone has therefore shown demonstrable commitments in tackling barriers to the deployment of women in its peace operations missions. There is a good-faith endeavour to expand training and the meaningful participation of women within the security services. There has been significant progress in women's participation in the military, and specific police units have been formed to address gender issues. With the passage of the gender equality and women's empowerment legislation in Sierra Leone, we have made concrete our aspiration to accelerate women's full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels and in all governance processes, including international peace and security, as the surest path to stability and prosperity.

Sierra Leone has maintained its firm commitment to the women and peace and security agenda as part of our contribution to the international community. Sierra Leone is on record for having submitted to the African Union its consolidated resource framework on the women and peace and security agenda, a report that is now being used as a model for other countries, particularly at the level of the Economic Community of West African States subregion, through lessons learned on information-sharing relating to the women and peace and security agenda. Sierra Leone serves as a board member of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action and, in our tenure as a member of the Security Council, will also sign the statement of shared commitments to advance the women and peace and security agenda.

In the context of the United Nations, we wish to make efforts alongside the United Nations to promote gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda through different approaches, including through

strengthening managerial leadership and accountability, particularly on the implementation of the women and peace and security mandate across United Nations peacekeeping operations and further strengthening systems and mechanisms for monitoring progress and producing analytical evidence-based progress reports. We also commend the strengthening of capacities and knowledge of all personnel, civilian police and military to advance the gender responsiveness of peacekeeping operations, as well as the strengthening peacekeeping engagements and partnerships with other United Nations entities and partners — internally and externally, at Headquarters and in missions — to achieve gender equality and other results related to the women and peace and security agenda.

Allow me to conclude with some concrete recommendations, in line with the questions contained in the concept note (S/2023/733, annex) for this debate.

First, we call on the United Nations to collaborate with regional organizations in order to provide, in real time, transparent information on and about the level of women's involvement in peace negotiations and mediation processes.

Secondly, we recommend that the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security consider conducting field visits that focus on monitoring the situation of women and girls in the months or years after the withdrawal of large United Nations peace operations. In addition, the Informal Expert Group can play a crucial role in the Security Council's assessment of the situation of women and girls, as well as gender issues on the ground, by providing expert insights, facilitating information exchange and promoting a more comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics in conflict and post-conflict settings. It is our belief that this will positively contribute to shining a light on trends in women's rights and gender equality in a transitional context, which is sorely needed in these unpredictable and uncertain times.

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

Mrs. Narváez Ojeda (Chile): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Feminist Foreign Policy Plus Group, formed by Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Israel, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, Rwanda, Spain, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Tunisia and my own country, Chile.

We commend Brazil for convening this debate.

As we are discussing today the practical implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and its shortcomings, and inspired by Bertha Lutz's push for gender equality in the Charter of the United Nations and beyond, we would like to share how feminist approaches can benefit the sustainability, long-term implementation and impact of the agenda. How do we explain the gradual decline of the situation of all women, adolescents and girls in conflict situations when we have at our disposal the Rome Statute, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the women and peace and security agenda and the different provisions of international humanitarian and human rights law? The Secretary-General's report (S/2023/725) is clear in highlighting that national and regional commitments to the women and peace and security agenda have continued to grow, indicating sustained support over two decades for the agenda's normative framework. Therefore, we know that the issue is not the lack of frameworks or guidelines.

What is lacking is the implementation on the ground. That is why we need to evaluate the extent of our political will and our methods of implementation to look at the problem differently. We should ask what more we can do or how we can act differently to make the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, adolescents and girls in all their diversity and the eradication of all forms of violence and discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, a reality on the ground. How can we make sure that women equally, directly and influentially participate in formal or high-level peace and political processes as a standard in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes? How can we include diverse voices, including those of the youth and LGBTI persons?

For our Group, a starting point would be to tackle the root causes of unequal power relations and structures, which perpetuate cycles of violence that prolong and exacerbate conflicts. Military intervention alone, without rebuilding the social fabric at the grassroots level, will do very little to deliver long-term solutions for women and, by extension, society as a whole. We need to understand peace not as the mere absence of violence and war, but rather as being grounded in an intersectional analysis of patriarchal systems, gender stereotypes and negative social norms, and the effects of unequal power relations as root causes of conflict.

We note with concern the documented incidents of reprisals against women and girls, women human rights defenders and civil society organizations for engaging with the United Nations. We thank and honour the women human rights defenders who bravely share their testimonies before the Council and other United Nations entities and fight for women's rights on the ground. We are appalled that, during the past year, the violation of women's human rights by parties to conflict continued, whether through different types of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, the threat of rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, or gender persecution. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war. Nevertheless, we must also remember that women are powerful agents of change and peacebuilders. Hence, it is imperative to foster local ownership of the women and peace and security agenda and empower civil society by giving them the tools for building resilience, including adequate and flexible financial resources to do so. Let us ensure that the women and peace and security agenda remains a framework to protect and empower women, and therefore let us steer away from dependency-generating approaches that take agency away from them. To that end, we would like to pose the following questions as part of a feminist analysis.

For the implementation of the women and peace and security framework, are we engaging enough with civil society and partners on the ground in a meaningful way and putting in place bottom-up decision-making mechanisms to place the needs of women and girls on the ground at the centre of our policies? Are we also doing enough capacity-building in our own ranks to ensure the principles of the women and peace and security agenda are adequately integrated by decision-makers as a central strategy to prevent and resolve conflicts? Furthermore, we cannot forget that we are accountable to women all around the world, who look up to the Council to, at the very least, protect them from the atrocities of war. We must reflect on the extent to which the Council is currently living up to that responsibility. How are we ensuring there are resources in place to ensure access to justice, including local reporting mechanisms? Are we implementing survivor-centred, trauma-informed approaches to respond to conflict-related violence, especially conflict-related sexual violence? Are we fighting impunity, including through international criminal proceedings, to strengthen the protection of women in conflict-affected countries?

Lastly, we note that while the world's military spending reached an all-time high of \$2.24 trillion in 2022, the Secretary-General's report flagged that no substantial progress has been made in increasing funding for women's organizations, including grassroots and feminist organizations, or the percentage of women in peace negotiations. Can we think of a more equitable distribution of such spending? The feminist approach of questioning and disrupting established structures and processes can show us the way and should accordingly be our guideline.

I will now say a few words in my national capacity.

(spoke in Spanish)

We thank Brazil for convening this open debate, and we also thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their presentations and the background provided.

We would like to recall that any decisions about peace that do not include the voices, realities and rights of women are unsustainable when it comes to peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. The inclusion of women in those processes sheds light on needs that were not previously identified. In addition, those gender provisions have incalculable effects on the well-being of women living in conflict and post-conflict zones. Their full, equal and meaningful participation continues to encounter considerable institutional limitations based on gender discrimination.

Therefore, robust support is required from States — but in particular from the Council — for civil society organizations, which are the starting point for women and girls' involvement in peace. Likewise, institutional frameworks must dismantle their patriarchal templates, recognizing women as equals who have their own voice and agency. A set of initiatives is currently in place that encourages the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, in particular the participation of women at both the political and technical levels, and that brings together civil society organizations, academia, States and international organizations. Among those initiatives we want to highlight the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, created in 2016, which has enabled closer coordination between Member States, creating a space for periodically sharing and exchanging lessons learned and best practices. The Network is made up of 100 States and international organizations that meet periodically to discuss more effective ways to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and its nine subsequent resolutions.

Chile is applying to the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations in order to gather comprehensive information that will enable us to fully evaluate the barriers that exist in the armed forces to the significant participation of women in United Nations peace operations, and therefore to implement measures aimed at eliminating those barriers and addressing the needs that have been identified with a view to significantly increasing our armed forces' deployment of uniformed women in peace operations. We hope that will be decisive in helping us close the gap in the national participation of women in international peace and security efforts.

We should remember that success in achieving the women and peace and security agenda is deeply linked to the ability to de-escalate conflicts, as expressed both in narratives of peace and concrete actions aimed at encouraging disarmament and reducing military budgets. Creating change for local female populations, as well as for the safety of women journalists, parliamentarians, mediators, peacemakers and peacebuilders, requires eliminating physical violence and the threat of physical violence through firearms. In that regard, there is no plan or measure worth more than strict control of small and light weapons and the restoration of a legitimate monopoly on violence to States, as the only guarantors of collective security. In recent years we have seen increases in military budgets and in private spending on small and light weapons, but as the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/725) shows, the money spent in no way correlates to an improvement in women's security. Just as we did 23 years ago, we are still calling for disarmament, prioritizing development, inclusion and protection policies and allowing women to live in spaces free of violence and in societies where they can have full, effective and meaningful participation. We women want peace.

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

Mr. Tun (Myanmar): Myanmar thanks the presidency of Brazil for organizing this important open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General and our other briefers for their insightful presentations.

The role and contribution of women in promoting and maintaining peace and security at the national and international levels has long been recognized. There is widespread international support for women's equal

and meaningful participation at all decision-making levels in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. However, nearly 25 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the international community still has much to do to translate those theoretical and rhetorical supports into realities on the ground and around the world. Conflicts are intensifying in many parts of the world. Women's rights are under growing attack. They continue to be marginalized in peace and security processes. Impunity for violence committed against women and girls, especially rape and other forms of sexual violence, is still a major challenge to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

In my country, Myanmar, women have been at the forefront of the resistance to the illegal military coup, from peaceful demonstrations to the disobedience movement and to the assumption of key leadership responsibilities in the National Unity Government. Women human rights defenders and leaders of civil-society organizations play an instrumental role in reporting the military junta's atrocities and responding to humanitarian needs on the ground across the country. The military forces deploy rape and other forms of sexual violence as part of their widespread and systematic attacks on the civilian population aimed at weakening the opposition to their illegal coup. Since the coup of February 2021, the military has so far killed a total of 613 women and arrested nearly 5,000. The military junta's atrocities have been well documented by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, and it has been shown that sexual and gender-based violence is a hallmark of the military's operations. Yet despite all those risks to their personal security, the participation of women in Myanmar in the resistance to the illegal coup and in support of peace, democracy and human rights has not weakened. In fact, they are a key driving force of the ongoing movement aimed at ending the illegal military's attempted coup and establishing a peaceful Myanmar, with federal democratic governance based on the rule of law and justice.

We are beyond the conflict-prevention stage in Myanmar. The illegal military coup and its campaign of brutal violence against the people have already thrown the country into its current multifaceted crisis. The focus now is on finding a sustainable solution. At this juncture, there is both an opportunity and a need for implementing the women and peace and security agenda in Myanmar. We must make sure that women's full,

equal, meaningful and safe participation is integral to our ongoing efforts to achieve a sustainable resolution. The regional and international community has a crucial role to play in that regard.

First, we must address the civilian protection crisis in Myanmar. That includes protecting women and girls from sexual violence and other serious crimes, particularly in conflict areas. While there is no domestic environment for effective accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, the Security Council should take concrete action to end the military's impunity for serious international crimes, including rape and sexual violence.

Secondly, we must support women's organizations and civil-society groups advocating for women's rights, peace and democracy. Their voices should be heard. In particular, I appeal to our neighbours and to third countries to support and provide safety for Myanmar women, including the civil servants and journalists who have fled the junta's ceaseless persecution.

Thirdly, we must ensure that women's organizations and leaders, including human rights defenders and peacebuilders, are among the key stakeholders, not only in resolving the current conflict but also in Myanmar's post-conflict governance and peacebuilding.

In conclusion, I call on the Security Council to take decisive action to create the conditions needed for a sustainable solution to the crisis in Myanmar. And I encourage it to include the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda as part of its response.

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

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank Foreign Minister Vieira for convening this important debate on the anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). I also thank the Secretary-General and the briefers whom we heard yesterday for their insights.

The role of women in peace and security is determined daily, as is evident in the frequent gendered violence that countless girls and women face, especially in armed conflict, where sexual assault is often weaponized. The current crisis in Israel and the Gaza Strip is only the latest example of such gendered impacts. The terrorist attacks by Hamas have severely harmed Israeli women in ways too distressing to detail here, and our deepest sympathies go to the victims and

survivors. We unequivocally condemn this terrorism and acknowledge Israel's right to defend its citizens against Hamas's actions.

United Nations agencies on the ground in Gaza are reporting an extensive humanitarian emergency. The United Nations Population Fund estimates that 50,000 women in Gaza are presently pregnant, with 5,500 expected to deliver next month. Together with other civilians, those women are facing significant hardships due to the ongoing military operations. They are often deprived of safe birthing services, vital supplies and essentials such as food, water and protection from air strikes. Immediate, unhindered humanitarian access is imperative to address the pressing needs of girls and women in Gaza. As the crisis escalates, it will be essential for the voices and stories of mothers and daughters to be heard and valued. Women are too often portrayed mainly as victims in the media, which sidelines their roles as leaders and decision-makers.

That very marginalization spurred the creation of resolution 1325 (2000) nearly 25 years ago. The women and peace and security agenda can champion the inclusion of women's perspectives in national and global dialogues concerning security, reconciliation and justice. Such an approach fosters unity in recognizing the shared challenges that girls and women encounter across divisive boundaries. There is a pressing demand for forums that promote dialogue, education, activism and policymaking. Those spaces can bolster collaborative networks that accentuate women's voices, paving the way for their impactful roles in justice, accountability, peacebuilding and decision-making in both Israel and Palestine.

In conclusion, the war between Israel and Hamas has disrupted a status quo that was unacceptable to Kenya, which understands the Palestinian yearning for independence and sovereignty. It was unacceptable to us, as we sympathize with Israel's constant vigilance against existential threats. The path forward requires a renewed dedication to a peace process that rejects terrorism as an acceptable form of resistance and steers towards a two-State solution. Without women's insights and interests at the core of the discussions with Israel, Palestine and the primary regional and global stakeholders, we jeopardize the potential for enduring peace and risk further calamity.

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

Mrs. Mimran Rosenberg (Israel): Twenty-four years have passed since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) at the Security Council, and we are still witnessing heinous crimes against women and girls, such as the one committed by the Hamas terror organization on 7 October in Israel. The testimonies, forensic reports and videos taken by the terrorists themselves all show the brutal gender-based and sexual-based violence, including rape and femicide, which paint an undeniable and grim picture of the reality that the international community failed to prevent. How am I to speak about the participation of women and girls in peace and security, when the women and girls in my country were the target — they were intentionally targeted — in attacks that amount to international war crimes and crimes against humanity?

Regrettably, despite the need to fight violations of the human rights of women and girls, the need to take action against the perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence and the need to create safe, secure and enabling environments for women peacebuilders and human rights defenders, the international community has failed to do so. Impunity for atrocities against women and girls remains prevalent. The systematic bias against the State of Israel is again rearing its head, this time at the expense of innocent lives. There must not be a place for double standards in the halls and chambers of the United Nations.

We recall resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1325 (2000) and call upon the international community, in particular the Security Council, to immediately and unequivocally condemn the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against innocent women and girls in Israel by the jihadist terror organization of Hamas, and we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held in Gaza. We further call upon the international community to do justice for the victims and survivors of the 7 October atrocities by bringing the perpetrators to justice. Therefore, we call upon the Security Council to include sexual violence as a designation criterion for the sanctions committee and to unanimously designate Hamas as a terror organization, as was done against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Hamas is ISIL. The horrific, barbaric and brutal massacre of 7 October attests to their genocidal ideology. Designating Hamas as a terror organization would constitute one step forward in the global fight against impunity, and therefore in our collective effort to implement the women and peace and security agenda.

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

Ms. Ahangari (Azerbaijan): We would like to thank the presidency of Brazil for convening the open debate on this very important topic.

We concur with the Secretary-General's remark in his report (S/2023/725) that women's full, equal and meaningful participation in building peace should be the norm and not an afterthought. Converting the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent Security Council resolutions into action would enable women to contribute their unique insights to achieving durable peace. Adopting a gender perspective that incorporates the specific needs of women and girls during post-conflict recovery efforts and the engagement of women in those activities is essential to repair the social fabric of a conflict-affected society. That is also relevant to our region, which is emerging from the three-decades-long armed conflict.

As reaffirmed in the concept note (S/2023/733, annex), this debate also provides a good opportunity to reflect on the implementation of core commitments, including respect for international law applicable to the protection of women and girls in armed conflict. Although international law and standards have developed significantly over the years, women and children account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict and hate-driven violence. Non-compliance by States with their international obligations and the lack of accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law remain serious ongoing challenges. It is important for the Council to persistently reiterate its demand for strict compliance with international obligations and the end of impunity for serious violations.

We are particularly concerned about the fate of women and girls taken hostage or reported missing in connection with armed conflict. Such situations put them at high risk of exploitation, abuse, trafficking and other forms of violation of their rights. Regretfully, in the past three decades, women and girls in Azerbaijan have experienced at first hand the devastating effects of the occupation of our territories by Armenia. One of the most tragic consequences of the conflict is that about 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan, including 267 women, are still missing because of the conflict. It was established that 98 of those women were taken as hostages.

Although they have been seen alive in captivity, their whereabouts are still unknown. We expect Armenia to shed light on the fate of the missing persons of Azerbaijan and bring to justice those responsible for their disappearance. Azerbaijan continues its efforts to raise awareness of that problem at the international level, including by submitting to the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women draft resolutions on missing persons and on women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts.

In conclusion, we once again reiterate that Azerbaijan will continue to advance the empowerment of women and support their participation in the four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda.

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

Mrs. Patel (India): At the outset, let me thank Brazil for convening this important open debate on the very crucial subject of women's participation in international peace and security.

Women are agents of social change and social cohesion. It is now universally acknowledged that the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women are critical factors for maintaining international peace and security. Sustainable peace requires an integrated approach based on coherence among the pillars of security, development, human rights, the rule of law and equality. In that context, resolution 1325 (2000) was path-breaking, as it linked gender equality and the maintenance of international peace and security for the first time. It also recognized women's participation as being a key to resolving conflicts and securing peace.

Over the years, we have seen a strengthening of the normative framework of the women and peace and security agenda. However, in spite of that, women are still routinely underrepresented in peace processes, political dialogues and peacebuilding. The gender perspective is still neglected in conflict prevention, recovery and reconstruction. For example, of approximately 95,000 peacekeepers, women make up only 4.8 per cent of military contingents and 10.9 per cent of formed police units in United Nations peacekeeping missions. It is essential that we increase the representation of female peacekeepers in United Nations peacekeeping operations to order to achieve sustainable peace and improve the well-being of women and girls in conflict-affected regions.

As the fifth-largest troop contributor to the United Nations, India made history in 2007 by deploying the first-ever all-female formed police unit for the United Nations Mission in Liberia. India's female peacekeepers are playing an important mentoring role in the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. We are proud that Major Suman Gawani received the United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award in 2019. India was the first country to contribute to the Secretary-General's Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and in 2017 signed the voluntary compact with the Secretary-General on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

We believe that enhancing the participation of women is crucial to ensuring peace and security in society. With that in mind, women in India are being encouraged to be at the forefront of community mobilization and the public's interface with the Government. In September India took a historic step towards gender equality when our Parliament enacted a Women's Reservation law, reserving one third of all seats in national and State legislatures for women. More than 1.5 million women now stand empowered to participate in all political decision-making processes at the national, regional and local levels. India is fully committed to contributing to and implementing the United Nations agenda on women and peace and security.

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

Ms. Vest (Lithuania): Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

This year we are marking the twenty-third anniversary of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000). The women and peace and security agenda plays an essential role in furthering women's effective, equal, meaningful and full participation and leadership in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and political processes. However, the gap between the global commitments set out in the resolution and the nine subsequent Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security is deepening, owing to the persistently unstable global situation. As we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in some parts of the world those rights are being

brutally violated. Lithuania condemns Hamas and its extensive and inhumane terrorist attacks across Israel and mourns the resulting loss of life. At this time our thoughts are with all the innocent victims whose lives have been irreparably affected.

Lithuania is appalled by the Taliban's deliberate and systematic repression of women and girls in Afghanistan. The ban on Afghan women working for non-governmental organizations and United Nations-led organizations has critically affected the delivery of basic services and humanitarian assistance. In addition, the Taliban continue to restrict education for girls, creating inequalities of opportunity for girls and for their dependents in the future. In the Sudan, women and girls have been subjected to gender-based violence, including sexual violence. As the conflict continues, they have to fight every day for access to life-saving reproductive health and protection services.

Russia's brutal, illegal and unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine has taken a tremendous toll on the dire humanitarian situation and has disproportionately affected women and girls. It is a principle enshrined in resolution 1325 (2000) that all the parties to an armed conflict must take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, in particular rape and other forms of sexual abuse. We reiterate that Russia should be brought to justice for its gruesome acts of torture and sexual violence against Ukrainian women and girls, which amount to war crimes, in addition to its forcible transfers and deportations of Ukrainian children to Russian-occupied areas, the Russian Federation or Belarus and its enabling of their illegal adoption in those areas. Russia must pay for all the damage that its war has caused. The victims deserve justice and redress.

Lithuania remains committed to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda both nationally and internationally. We have continued to support the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund since its launch in 2016. Furthermore, we cooperate actively with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Special Representative Pramila Patten visited Lithuania just last week and participated in an international and regional discussion on how to ensure effective protection, assistance and prevention systems for survivors of sexual violence in conflict-related contexts. We encourage all Member States to maintain a safe environment that is conducive to

women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in political, peacebuilding and conflict-prevention processes.

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

Mrs. Vives Balmaña (Andorra) (*spoke in French*): We would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on Brazil's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month, and we thank you for convening today's open debate and for your concept note (S/2023/733, annex). We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2023/725), and I would also like to thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Representative of Brazil as Guarantor of the Peace Dialogue Table between the Government of Colombia and the National Liberation Army for their introductory briefings, as well as the civil-society representative for her rich contribution.

Andorra aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

We appreciate the areas of focus of today's debate — the participation of women, respect for international law and gender issues and women's rights in the Security Council. Protecting and promoting women's rights and leadership in conflict situations and humanitarian emergencies is a *sine qua non* for peace and sustainable development. Similarly, we cannot build sustainable peace and development if violence and especially impunity for conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence continue to be pervasive. Indeed, as the Secretary-General points out in his policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace,

“We — Governments, the United Nations and all segments of society — must fight back and take concrete action to challenge and transform gender norms, value systems and institutional structures that perpetuate exclusion or the status quo.”

In that regard, one of Andorra's priorities is promoting women's participation in all areas of political life. Education, which is a right, a necessity and a Sustainable Development Goal, helps to open pathways to equality and cooperation. My country's convictions are reflected in our Government, which is made up of more women than men, and in our Parliament, where parity among elected representatives has essentially been maintained in every election since 2011, without quotas or obligations.

Peace and security shape our world. Giving space to women has a multiplier effect on the sustainability of peace, and as in the case of Colombia, it has helped to achieve progress. But the spread of conflicts in recent times, in a context of increasing threats, has brought humankind to a critical point. As is indicated in the resolutions of the women and peace and security agenda and in the Secretary-General's report in particular, while we have a solid normative and legal framework for guaranteeing women's full and equal participation, requiring the parties to conflicts to prevent violations of women's rights and demanding that conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence be prevented and prosecuted, its full and effective implementation nonetheless remains a challenge. We welcome the Secretary-General's initiatives, such as last year's launch of the *Framework for the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence* and the *Legal Guidebook on State Obligations for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*.

Andorra supports initiatives aimed at increasing women's leadership in peace and security. We joined the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and are encouraged by the progress made thus far, as envisaged in the Secretary-General's uniformed gender parity strategy 2018—2028. In addition, as a member of the International Organization of la Francophonie, Andorra supports that Organization's capacity-building initiatives to promote gender equality.

Women's participation is crucial at all stages of this complex issue that is peace and security. It is a commitment that all of us, as stakeholders, have made.

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

Ms. Persaud (Guyana): At the outset, I wish to express appreciation to Brazil for convening this open debate.

Secretary-General Guterres has stated in his report (S/2023/725) that women's full, equal and meaningful participation in building peace is still an aspiration or an afterthought. This pronouncement comes 23 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and later resolutions that collectively comprise a strong framework on women and peace and security. At this time, when women and peace and security is prominent on the agenda of the Council, amplified by the introduction of the shared commitments, which have seen successive presidencies highlight key aspects of the agenda, we still have more

to do. Despite this high visibility and activism, progress has been minimal. Indeed, it is clear that the focus must be on implementation.

While representing at least half of those affected by armed conflicts, women are still excluded from conflict prevention and resolution. As a result, the unique challenges faced by women and girls and their relief needs are often not addressed.

As our world continues to groan under increased armed conflicts and horrific humanitarian crises, women and children are the primary victims. Their human rights are trampled upon on a daily basis, and their lives seem without value. Sexual and gender-based violence continues to be prevalent. It is alarming that the number of women and girls living in conflict-affected countries is reported at 614 million in 2022, 50 per cent higher than the number in 2017.

The Security Council must continue to insist that reports on country situations include substantial information, data and analysis on the situation of women and girls. Parties to conflicts must be urged to take special measures to protect women and girls from all forms of violence. Those who have committed atrocities against women and girls cannot be allowed to escape with impunity. It is also necessary that peace agreements have a gender perspective.

There must be a shift from rhetoric to setting specific, concrete targets against which progress can be measured. Guyana welcomes the Secretary-General's commitment for the United Nations to support an initial minimum target of one third of participants in mediation and peace processes being women. We agree with the assessment in the report that Member States and other international organizations must use their political and financial capital and their level of influence to advance women and peace and security.

In Guyana, our defence force is committed to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and to bridging the leadership gaps at all levels throughout the force, creating equal opportunities for women. This includes professional development opportunities and providing an environment for women to comfortably serve in the military. An awareness campaign is being used to promote the agenda in the force. As a result of these efforts, in Guyana there has been some increase in the number of women at leadership levels in our force.

Change is possible, but we must act. Let us commit to moving away from theory to practice, ensuring that women are equally and meaningfully included in peace processes, humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction.

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

Mr. Mao (Cambodia): First, I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening today's crucial debate on "Women's participation in international peace and security: from theory to practice". I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Secretary-General, the briefers and previous speakers for their insightful remarks.

Cambodia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Allow me to speak now in my national capacity.

The significant role of women in various sectors, notably the socioeconomic scope, has been recognized for many years. Yet, it is only after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) that women's role in and contributions to peace and security have been acknowledged. This resolution wisely recognizes women's significant contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. However, there are some cases in which women may struggle to contribute to their societies owing to a lack of opportunities. Therefore, my delegation urges all Member States to fully empower women through national policies and strategies for the implementation of the resolution. And it is important that we translate our commitments into concrete actions.

In that regard, Cambodia is proud to share our progress towards enhancing women's participation across all sectors. This includes prominent positions in the public sector, such as the President of the National Assembly of Cambodia being a woman, and an increased number of female ministers, amounting to 10 per cent of our newly formed Government, announced last August.

Cambodia, a nation that cherishes peace, has transformed itself from a host country into an active contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations since 2006, deploying 9,205 troops, including 728 women, to countries in Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Cambodia's commitment is never limited with regard to promoting the vital role of women in

leadership, peace and security. In 2022, Cambodia ranked twelfth among 121 troop-contributing countries and second among ASEAN countries in terms of the number of women peacekeepers deployed. Currently, Cambodia deploys 903 troops, of which 148 are women. This number equals 16.42 per cent, exceeding the United Nations limit of 15 per cent.

We are also proud to share another milestone — the adoption of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, at the fortieth and forty-first ASEAN Summits, held in Cambodia in November 2022. The Plan aims to galvanize ASEAN to advance the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda to promote sustainable peace and security for all citizens and to boost the four pillars of women's participation, namely protection, prevention and relief and recovery from conflicts.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate Cambodia's strong commitment to implementing the women and peace and security agenda for the sake of humankind.

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

Ms. Marin Sevilla (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Although our Latin American and Caribbean region is not involved in armed conflicts, it faces other kinds of systemic aggression, such as political destabilization, foreign interventionism and unilateral coercive measures, with all of the devastating consequences they entail, primarily affecting women and girls, as well as potentially vulnerable populations. For Venezuela, advancing towards a society that is definitively equal and with rights for women is an absolute political priority, not only in the areas related to women's participation, leadership and political decision-making, but in those related to their role in strengthening the social fabric and active role in conflict prevention and resolution at various stages, as well as in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. This policy must also be a priority and cross-cutting issue on the agenda of multilateral and regional organizations, such as the United Nations.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has repeatedly expressed in many international forums its condemnation of unilateral coercive measures and their negative impacts. Such measures are multi-pronged weapons of war that flagrantly undermine human rights, financial systems, humanitarian assistance, supply chains, information and communications

technologies, access to universal health, education and other critical infrastructure systems that are vital to the development and sustainability of all States. One of the most destructive consequences of that cruel and dehumanizing policy is its impact on the political stability of States and the reversal of progress made, especially in the areas of the rights of women and girls, internal destabilization, the trafficking and smuggling of migrants by mafia groups, and the commercial use of humanitarian assistance for business purposes. Those impacts are an undeniable reality that must be stopped. They have resulted only in instability, poverty and exclusion, thereby further depriving women and girls of their fundamental rights. That is why we demand that they be lifted immediately.

Let us stress on their behalf that any policy to promote women and peace and security will lack meaning, legitimacy and remain incomplete as long as Palestinian women are oppressed under the yoke of an occupying Power, the Government of Israel. The siege of Gaza has resulted in thousands of casualties, including women and girls, with bombing that does not discriminate on the basis of gender, social class, political affiliation or age, while the future of the resilient Palestinian people has been blocked. Peace efforts must include women actors. But before their inclusion can be achieved, the military aggression of the occupying Power, the Government of Israel, must cease and genuine efforts to bring about peace must be resumed.

Lastly, Venezuela would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its unequivocal condemnation of sexual exploitation and abuse in all United Nations entities, including in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, as well as its full support for the policy of zero tolerance for such crimes and the urgent need to bring all those responsible to justice. Venezuela's foreign policy remains committed to decisively combating the feminization of poverty and the exclusion of women from decision-making processes and devising public policies. Women's leadership roles in the processes of development, transformation, liberation and peacebuilding represent the essential path and a secure destiny that we must decisively strengthen and consolidate. Despite the complexity of the challenge and the opposition of multiple global Powers and ideologies, Venezuela will continue on the path of realizing that ideal in favour of women's rights and the inclusion of all.

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

Ms. Panteli (Cyprus): Let me thank you, Sir, for organizing this very important debate and express our appreciation to all the briefers for their insightful briefings and recommendations.

My statement complements the statement made on behalf of the European Union, to which Cyprus fully subscribes.

Some 23 years have elapsed since the unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). That was a historic moment, taking into consideration that the breakthrough resolution affirmed the importance of gender perspectives in peace negotiations, peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding and post-conflict governance. Two years before the milestone twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), it is crucial to assess what we have achieved, but mostly where we need to be by 2025. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace processes and decision-making structures should be not just an aspiration but also a prerequisite for sustainable peace.

Since 2000, important progress has been achieved in the women and peace and security agenda. However, the sad reality is that we are now witnessing major pushbacks against the rights of women and girls across the world. As more women and girls come into the spotlight because of the women and peace and security agenda, the number of attacks and reprisals against them is on the rise. We must ensure that the participation of women in the women and peace and security agenda is not only full, equal and meaningful but also safe. It is our common responsibility to ensure zero tolerance for any form of attack, intimidation or reprisal against women and girls for their participation in political life, work on human rights and humanitarian affairs, peacebuilding activities and cooperation with United Nations mechanisms.

In that regard, Cyprus notes with concern that as recorded in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/725), widespread attacks against women human rights defenders in conflict-affected settings still continues. It is Cyprus's firm belief that civil society organizations serve the cause of peace, security and prosperity at the local, national and international levels. In the face of unprecedented challenges around the world, it is our common responsibility to ensure that women's and women-led grass-roots organizations have

the funding and operational capacities to participate in the full spectrum of the women and peace and security agenda.

For that reason, Cyprus has responded to the call of the Secretary-General and will voluntarily contribute to the Invest-in-Women Global Campaign of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund for the period from 2023 to 2025, with the aim of supporting women's organizations and human rights defenders in crisis situations. Undeniably, women and girls pay the highest price in conflict situations. Global repercussions, including the gender-specific dimensions of the impact of climate-related risks on peace and security and the gender gap in food security, are not an exception. Those challenges are gravely impacting the most vulnerable. Cyprus believes that the roles of women and girls in building peace and stability in post-conflict situations and peace processes goes beyond the issue of gender equality. Their participation is catalytic to the efforts to achieve lasting peace and prosperous societies. Ensuring the inclusive implementation of peace agreements is a sine qua non for overcoming the fragility of such situations.

The women and peace and security agenda is arguably one of the most recognizable agendas of the Security Council, not just because it acknowledges the role of women but also because it proves that there is no peace without women. It is therefore our collective responsibility to enhance our efforts to achieve the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and to adopt gender-sensitive approaches in order to create a more peaceful and prosperous world for all. Now is the moment to translate our commitment into action.

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

Mr. Da Cruz (Angola): Allow me to begin by praising the leadership of the Federative Republic of Brazil in conducting the work of its presidency of the Security Council in an international context of great challenges to international peace and security, in which women and children are unfortunately the main victims. I would also like to note the importance of this annual open debate on women and peace and security. Angola has been following the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve gender parity at the United Nations, for which we congratulate and encourage him.

Resolution 1325 (2000) reaffirms the importance of promoting gender equality in all phases of peacebuilding and security processes. It focuses on recognizing the specific impacts that contemporary conflicts and

situations of insecurity have on the lives of women and girls around the world and the efforts made to mitigate and minimize them. It highlights the importance of the equal participation and the full involvement of women in efforts to maintain and promote peace and security, as well as the need to increase the role of women in decision-making processes in order to prevent and resolve conflicts and to enhance the participation of women in peace operations. In that sense, those resolutions created an international political basis that emphasizes that gender parity in conflict prevention, management and resolution is a cross-cutting factor in all phases of the peace-building processes in countries in conflict or emerging from it, as well as countries at peace, such as Angola. Yet 23 years later, women in numerous countries remain either under- or unrepresented in decision-making processes, which poses a major challenge to the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Angola has been playing an important role in conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as in promoting peace and democracy in Africa, especially in the Great Lakes region, through diplomatic initiatives to promote permanent political dialogue and build mutual trust and cooperation for inclusive economic growth, prosperity and the common good. Our foreign policy on peace and security is built on our own national experience and our commitment to the unwavering promotion of national reconciliation, social unity and cohesion and the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law.

In 2017, cognizant of the unequal impact that conflicts have on women and men and of the need for the greater participation of women and the inclusion of the gender-equality dimension in conflict prevention, management and resolution processes, the Government of Angola adopted a national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The main objective was to enhance coordination and to make the various programmes for integrating women into defence, internal security and cooperation policies more effective and pragmatic. The plan is aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making processes and their full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security in our country. It is also designed to contribute to eradicating violations of women's rights in conflict situations, including sexual violence and trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

As a result of the implementation of the national plan, women have been playing an increasingly important and leading role in Angola's peace and security initiatives for silencing the guns in Africa.

The plan has also contributed to a fairer representation of women in decision-making bodies. The presence of women is currently at 38 per cent in Parliament and 40 per cent in the Government generally, and women are responsible for politically sensitive portfolios such as finance, labour, health, youth, education and social affairs. Furthermore, the positions of the President of Parliament, the Vice-President of the Republic and the President of the Constitutional Court are also held by women.

In May, Angola hosted the first International Women's Forum for Peace and Democracy, which represented an opportunity to reflect on how to advance stability and the sustainable development agenda and strengthen the rule of law in Africa, while ensuring women's greater involvement in mediation and conflict-resolution initiatives. It will also serve to renew our common commitment to fostering gender equality and empowering women and girls, as well as eradicating violence. Those are all key priorities of the Government of Angola within the framework of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

In an international context of great challenges, we need to prioritize multilateralism as a way of reaching consensus on the preservation of international peace and security, the promotion of sustainable development and the defence of human rights. To that end, we must increase women's participation and incorporate a gender perspective into all our peace and security efforts.

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

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Foreign Minister of Brazil, Mr. Mauro Vieira, for convening this important debate on women, peace and security. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Guterres, the Executive Director of UN-Women and all the other briefers for their valuable statements.

We are approaching the twenty-fifth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which provides for women's equal participation in decision-making, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. However, the continued threats to global security and the negative trends that the world has been witnessing have been undermining the progress that has been made in the area of women's rights and preventing the full realization of gender equality and global peace. In his most recent report on women and

peace and security (S/2023/725), which focused on ensuring the meaningful participation of women in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the Secretary General focused on the need to invest in implementing the commitments that have already been made in those areas.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and with the support of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Bahrain remains committed to its international obligations on women, including resolution 1325 (2000), as well as to all efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda. We focus on comprehensive human security in all its dimensions with regard to implementing that agenda, as it is closely linked to sustainable development. Our High Women's Council, chaired by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, has had a qualitative and sustainable impact on gender equality and the advancement of women and has shared successful national experiences and best practices at regional and international levels.

The Kingdom of Bahrain stresses that all parties to armed conflicts must respect the principles of international law related to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially the commitments that apply to such parties, including those contained in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, their Additional Protocol of 1977, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women of 1977 and the Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol.

Given the serious challenges currently confronting the Middle East, with their painful humanitarian dimensions, in which women and children suffer the most, Bahrain calls for immediately implementing a ceasefire, ending military operations and providing protection to all innocent civilians on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides. We also call for the release of all prisoners, hostages and detainees and for facilitating the delivery under international humanitarian law of medical supplies, food, water, fuel and electricity to the Gaza Strip, so as to alleviate the humanitarian disaster that is affecting more than 2 million Palestinians.

In conclusion, Bahrain reaffirms its support to all international efforts to ensure gender equality in every development and humanitarian field and to enhance the contribution of women to peace and security at all levels.

The President: The representative of Algeria has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Sahraoui (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation has asked for the floor in response to a statement by the representative of Morocco that was startling and insolent, to say the least. The statement by the representative of Algeria did not even remotely touch on the situation of women in Morocco. We will not respond to the lies and slander in his statement, which clearly demonstrate the level to which his country has sunk. Here in this Chamber I would like to stress the following points.

First, we cannot address the topic of this meeting, that is, the issue of women and peace and security, without discussing the problem of women who are languishing under the yoke and tyranny of occupation. We reiterate from this rostrum our tribute to all women who resist colonialism and injustice everywhere, especially in Palestine and Western Sahara. We stand in reverence for their sacrifices.

The Sahrawi women, whether the representative of Morocco approves it or not, are part of a people whose presence no colonial Power can abolish. They are languishing under the yoke of occupation which took their land and deprived them of their basic rights. Those people are striving for freedom and for an end to occupation. Despite the suffering of Sahrawi women under occupation, they are still struggling for their inalienable and imprescriptible rights, foremost of which is the right to self-determination.

Secondly, the practices of occupation — its violations of human rights and persecution — are rejected and condemned. They have been documented by the Secretary-General in his recent report A/78/249 submitted to the General Assembly. That report is the latest among many reports which all criticize the human rights situation in Western Sahara. They show the ugly face of the occupation by presenting conclusive facts that cannot be denied. Those are facts about violations against women activists such as Sultana Khaya and Aminatou Haydar and many other Sahrawi women. They are examples of activists who refuse to be broken or to abandon their rights.

Lastly, no one can take away from us the right to defend peoples languishing under occupation and seeking self-determination. I stress that the Sahrawi people are an occupied people, despite those that try

to falsify the facts. That is a reality confirmed by the Secretary-General in his recent report A/78/249 and the matter is an issue of decolonization. Paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's report confirms that:

“The Security Council addresses Western Sahara as a matter of peace and security, calling in successive resolutions for a ‘just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara’. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples address it as a Non-Self-Governing Territory and an issue of decolonization.”

The truth is clear. The question of Western Sahara is an issue of decolonization and is viewed from that perspective by the United Nations bodies.

The President: The representative of Morocco has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Moutchou (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation finds itself obliged to ask to make a further statement at the Security Council because of the new intervention, which is full of hate and lies, by the Algerian delegation.

Over the course of yesterday and today, 98 delegations; the Secretary-General; the Executive Director of UN-Women; the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission; and the representative of civil society have not in any way referred to the question of the Moroccan Sahara for the simple reason that it has absolutely nothing to do with this debate.

As usual, Algeria — and only Algeria — through its Minister for Foreign Affairs, tried to poison this debate and exploit it for political purposes, which reflects the destructive separatist agenda of the North African region.

Algeria must be ashamed for referring to the question of the Moroccan Sahara while it is sequestering entire populations, in particular women and children, in a prison called the Tindouf camps. Women and girls living in those camps suffer the worst violations of their rights under the supervision and with the agreement and

participation of the Algerian authorities. They are left to the mercy of Algeria and the separatist armed group linked to terrorists, Frente POLISARIO, which spreads terror and practices slavery, servitude and sexual abuse in the camps.

The international press reported that more than 150 young girls were being held against their will in those camps. In particular Maloma Morales de Matos, Darya Embarek Selma, Nadjiba Mohamed Kacem, Koria Badbad Hafed and many others were all victims of the Frente POLISARIO and the so-called head of the Frente POLISARIO, separatist Brahim Ghali, who is wanted in a European court for crimes against humanity, rape and sexual violence, in particular against Khadijatou Mahmoud.

Children, in particular young girls, in the Tindouf camps are not spared the worst violations of their rights and are subjected to propaganda, indoctrination, recruitment and exploitation day and night. Worse still, the world was concerned to see videos that had been filmed in the Tindouf camps showing wave after wave of forced enlistment of child soldiers, including girls, by the Frente POLISARIO. Those children are forced to join military units and provided with full military equipment necessary for combat. They are deprived of their fundamental rights, their childhood, their innocence and their schooling. That barbaric and criminal practice of the recruitment and enlistment of sequestered children is carried out with total impunity for terrorist, criminal and military purposes, in plain sight and with the complicity and awareness of the host country, Algeria, in flagrant violation of international law and the most fundamental rights — the rights of children. Those violations are modelled after those of terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida and Da'esh, and Algeria and its sponsor, the Frente POLISARIO, should be held accountable for those hateful crimes in an international tribunal.

Even international humanitarian assistance intended for the sequestered population in the Tindouf camps is systematically misappropriated on a large scale. Indeed, in its report *Evaluation of Algeria WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan 2019-2022*, published in January 2023, the World Food Programme (WFP) stated,

“Recently, sources stated that the humanitarian assistance ‘has known major misappropriation over the years’, with goods ‘substituted with ones

of lesser quality, stolen or sold in the camps'. One result of this was 'a major shortage in essential food items, including necessary items for babies and new-borns'." (*para. 155*)

The report also proves that humanitarian assistance is being sold in the Algerian town of Tindouf and in neighbouring countries. Indeed, it shows that there is no WFP oversight of the distribution of humanitarian assistance in the camps, and there is no access for its staff to the camp and in particular to the clandestine warehouses. In that regard, how can Algeria dare come before the Council and talk about the question of Moroccan Sahara when it and the Frente POLISARIO are stealing humanitarian assistance that is intended for the population sequestered in the Tindouf camps?

Algeria continues to violate international humanitarian law opposing the registration of the people in the Tindouf camps, despite endless requests from the Council to do so since 2011. Why is that so? The answer to that question is very simple and clear. Conducting a census of that population will show that Algeria has been trying to deceive the international community for almost 50 years by artificially increasing the number of its inhabitants. Conducting a census and interviewing people in the Tindouf camps would mean that they can choose one of the sustainable solutions that international law provides for them, in particular the free return to Moroccan Sahara. However, Algeria is well aware that those populations will choose to return to the Moroccan Sahara rather than lose the shameless political advantage of their sequestration on its territory. As I said, a census would deprive the Frente POLISARIO and the Algerian authorities of the money stolen from the misappropriation of humanitarian assistance, as confirmed in the WFP report from January 2023 and the reports of the European Anti-Fraud Office and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees before that.

In her statement to the Human Rights Council in March 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, reiterated her serious concerns regarding the violation of human rights by the Algerian authorities. She, stated:

"In Algeria, I am concerned by increasing restrictions on fundamental freedoms, including an increase in arrests and detentions of human rights

defenders, civil society members and political opponents. I call on the Government to change course and take all necessary steps to guarantee its people's rights to freedom of speech, association and peaceful assembly."

Furthermore, Ms. Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, indicated in a communication published in February that she is concerned about the growing repression against civil society by Algerian authorities following the dissolution of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights and the Youth Action Rally, two of the most important human rights associations in Algeria.

She stated:

"Acts of intimidation, silencing and repression against the human rights movement in Algeria must stop".

She continued:

"We have been sharing strong concerns over numerous provisions of the Algerian law on associations, which contradict international human rights law".

I wish to add just one more paragraph to inform the international community on the valiant Kabyle people, with a population of more than 8 million and over 9,000 years of history, who continue to be denied their legitimate aspirations and most fundamental rights, including the right to self-determination. Its legitimate representative are being hunted, arrested and persecuted — even as they already suffer the horrors of forced exile. It is unacceptable that, in this day and age, the valiant Kabyle people are being subjected to a general blockade and collective punishment simply because they are reaffirming their legitimate right to self-determination. The United Nations has the political and moral obligation to redress this historic injustice against the Kabyle people, one of the oldest in Africa.

In conclusion, no offence to the Algerian delegation, but there are no Sahrawi women. There are women from the south of Morocco and, like women from across Morocco, from Tangier to La Güera, they are all Moroccan — they always have been and always will be.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.