

Mr. Ramirez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Mariano Rajoy Brey, President of the Government of Spain, and we thank the Spanish delegation for its initiative in convening this important debate. We would also like to commend the briefings by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and by Under-Secretary-General Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, whom we congratulate for her tireless and successful work as the Executive Director of UN-Women. We would also like to thank Ms. Julienne Lusenge, Ms. Yanar Mohammed and Ms. Alaa Murabit for their important briefings.

Gender inequality and diverse forms of violence against women and girls result from various phenomena supported by deep religious, political and sociocultural roots that have prevailed throughout history in many countries, creating massive and ongoing violations of the human rights of women and girls. That is an unacceptable situation.

Exclusion, inequality and the different forms of sexual violence against women and girls in times

of armed conflict only reflect and exacerbate the imbalances and inequalities that women suffer in non-conflict periods. Those inequalities generate the conditions of specific vulnerability that require urgent attention and the highest political commitment. If we do not address that injustice in peacetime, we will be even less able to do so in times of armed conflict.

We are celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which recognized the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and the key role that women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts as well as in peacebuilding and the consolidation of peace. We welcome that.

There have been significant advances in the normative sphere in the past 15 years. Nevertheless, great challenges and a sense of frustration remain, since women in situations of armed conflict continue to suffer disproportionately from the brutal consequences of those conflicts. They remain the objects of recurrent and systematic violence and sexual abuse. That situation is, unfortunately, linked to the strategic, ideological and financial objectives of extremist and terrorist groups, such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Al-Nusra Front, the Army of Conquerors and Boko Haram, among others.

In addition, women are underrepresented in forums devoted to peacebuilding and the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The situation provides clear evidence that, throughout recent years, genuine political commitment to the issue has been lacking. We are convinced that the participation and contributions of women at all levels, stages and areas related to conflict management are essential in order to prevent conflicts and

achieve lasting peace. There can be no international peace and security if we do not include or have due consideration for and incorporate half of the world's population, namely, women and girls.

Venezuela is a land of peace. We have no areas of armed conflict in our territory, and we do not participate in any. That is why our Bolivarian revolution is at the forefront of ensuring gender equality and empowering women so that they have the possibility of serving as leaders in our society. Our major battle is against poverty and exclusion. We understand clearly that women have a leading role to play in that fundamental development effort, because women embody and represent the spiritual foundation of our society and the umbilical cord to our culture and our future.

Under the inspiration of the late President Hugo Chávez Frías and as part of our 1999 constitutional process, the Bolivarian Constitution guarantees the broadest human rights for our people and establishes gender equality, while also banning any kind of discrimination against women, whether on religious, racial or ethnic grounds. We do not tolerate any kind of exclusion or violence against women.

Over the past 16 years, women have served, in accordance with our Constitution, as Speakers of our National Assembly and as leaders in our judiciary and electoral bodies; they have also served as moral leaders. We have reformed our penal code to specifically criminalize violence against women. In the ministerial composition of our Government, women are in the majority. In our legislative elections, 50 per cent of the candidates must be women in accordance with the new electoral law.

We have created the Ministry for the Popular Power for Women, and community councils are, in the vast majority, headed by women, through which they manage resources and direct projects aimed at benefiting their communities. Today, women in our country direct fundamental aspects of our society on an equal basis with men. We therefore have full moral authority to demand an end to discrimination and violence against women and girls, and to repudiate the notion of women as sex objects in consumer society or as the spoils of war at the hands of extremists. This world, wracked by violence and extremism, must act more decisively, and its leaders must act with greater political determination to address this injustice.

We welcome the reference in resolution 2242 (2015), adopted today, to the importance of men and boys working together to promote the participation of women in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts and in peacebuilding and post-conflict situations. The “HeforShe” campaign promoted by UN-Women — of whose Executive Board we are a member and which we commend — should serve as a commitment and guide for the actions of everyone, not just women, in times of armed conflict as well as in peacetime.

The prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes is always the best and most appropriate tool for preventing the harmful and devastating effects of armed conflicts on the civilian population, particularly on women and children. It is therefore essential to halt the training, equipping and supporting of non-State actors and extremists, who are used as instruments of political destabilization to overthrow Governments, acting in service to the geopolitical ambitions of foreign actors, and in most cases, they serve only to incite the commission of atrocities, acting with impunity against women and children. Such groups today have covered Africa and the Middle East in blood. They are motivated by extremist ideologies that target women and girls in the most abhorrent and unacceptable way.

If, in line with international law, we fully respected and honoured the ban on the provision of weapons and financial support to extremist groups, there would be a decrease in the operational capabilities of those actors, thus reducing the harmful and irreparable consequences of armed conflicts on the civilian population, particularly on women and children.

We welcome the call made today in the resolution just adopted to continue working to improve the training of all personnel deployed in the field so as to strengthen the presence of gender experts and advisers on the protection of women in the staff of the various United Nations peacekeeping missions.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates its support for the zero-tolerance policy with regard to the incidents of violence and sexual abuse that have had taken place or will take place in operations carried out by the United Nations. The Organization should show resolve and coherence regarding the importance of accountability for any personnel who commit such crimes. It is also crucial for the international community to be firm in condemning countries whose personnel commit these types of crimes and encourage them to adopt the measures necessary to punish those responsible for acts of abuse and sexual exploitation committed by foreign forces not associated with the United Nations, so that such reprehensible actions do not go unpunished.

In conclusion, we hope that this wide-ranging and fruitful debate will enable us to act and move forward concretely in resolving this issue. As we have stated, women, girls and boys can no longer be considered the spoils of war or objects of violence and oppression in any society or under any circumstance. That would be an outrage to us as human beings.