

Mr. Tin (Myanmar): At the outset, my delegation thanks the Spanish presidency for organizing this important open debate. I also thank the Secretary- General for his report (S/2015/716) and the Executive Director of UN-Women and others for their insightful briefings.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam who spoke on behalf of the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The fifteenth anniversary of the Council's landmark resolution 1325 (2000) presents us with the opportunity

to review the progress made and strengthen our resolve to address the remaining challenges in alleviating the impact of conflicts on women and girls. As the global study has indicated, the nature of warfare today is changing. Today, conflicts are becoming more complex, and the number of major conflicts has risen drastically. Brutal extremist terrorism has raised its ugly head and become a major threat to global peace and security. Due to their vulnerability, women and children are the first group to bear the brunt of violent conflict. It has therefore become all the more urgent to revitalize our collective efforts to better protect women in conflict.

My delegation commends the United Nations for keeping the issue of protecting women and girls high on its agenda. Much has been done to implement key aspects of the Council's landmark resolution 1325 (2000). The creation of such institutions as UN-Women should be counted as examples of very positive progress.

As the debate focuses on translating rhetoric to effective results, my delegation wishes to share some of the steps taken in Myanmar to address the issue at hand. Sexual violence is a crime strongly abhorred by our traditional values and strictly forbidden by law and the culture of Myanmar. As such, severe legal action is taken against perpetrators of all reported cases, be they civilians or members of security forces. The penal code strongly prescribes severe penalties for committing sexual violence. We have put in place a strong legal foundation for punishing violent sexual crimes. Military personnel are given in-house training to ensure compliance with the Military Act, codes of conduct and relevant civil laws. Violent sexual crimes are condemned — and not condoned — by law and practice in Myanmar.

As a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Myanmar has taken a series of steps to eliminate discrimination and violence against women in accordance with the Convention. Institutions set up to oversee the issue of women have been established. A 10-year national strategic plan for the advancement of women (2013-2023), which includes measures to address violence

against women, is being implemented. Another significant step taken was the 5 June 2014 adoption by the Government of Myanmar of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, initiated by the United Kingdom. It reflects our renewed commitment to joining the international community in advocating on this issue.

Over the past four and a half years, the reforms in Myanmar have promoted democratic values and opened up society, creating greater political and media freedom. They have given civil society and international organizations greater opportunities to work more actively and closely with Government institutions and local communities in protecting women. Our newfound media freedom has also had an impact on the people as a whole, through its creation of a better environment in which anyone can file a report without fear about any wrongful act in which rights are abused. With the cooperation of the United Nations, the Government has taken steps to raise public awareness about the importance of gender equality and the protection of women. In October 2013, Myanmar organized an open day on women and peace and security to mark the anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). The event promoted greater awareness of this landmark resolution among the people, Government officials and parliamentarians.

In Myanmar, civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are now able to actively participate in activities aimed at preventing violence against women, including conducting surveys and research in order to obtain reliable data that can facilitate measures against sexual violence. We have organized seminars on violence against women across the country. We are also working with UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund and NGOs to implement projects that include improving female victims' access to justice and developing mechanisms within communities to respond to acts of sexual violence. In another bold step, the Government, in cooperation with the United Nations, has been working hard to enact a law combating violence against women that is now in its final drafting stage. We hope that once it is enacted, this important legislation will contribute significantly to enhancing the protection of women and girls against violence.

At the regional level, Myanmar is also working with ASEAN member States to protect the rights of women within the framework of ASEAN's Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation.

As my delegation has frequently said, the best way to end violence against women in situations of armed conflict is to end those conflicts. Myanmar firmly believes that without peace and reconciliation

we cannot build a developed and democratic society. We are therefore making sincere and serious efforts to end the conflict that has plagued our country for more than six decades, and we are making unprecedented progress, since almost all our armed ethnic groups have been agreed on the draft text of our nationwide ceasefire agreement since 31 March 2014. Tomorrow the agreement will be signed by the Government and those armed ethnic groups that are ready to do so. It will mark not only a milestone in our history but also a watershed in our peacebuilding process and in our efforts to create an environment conducive to eliminating the violent impact of conflict on our people. We hope that the ensuing political dialogue will encourage more women to participate in the process. The needs of vulnerable groups, including women and children, must also be given special consideration.

In our universal condemnation of acts of violence against women, we must be sure not to encourage exploitation of this emotive issue as a tool for one's own political agenda. Myanmar welcomes the efforts of the United Nations to advance the agenda on women and peace and security. In doing so, we believe that the United Nations must work with Member States by taking a cooperative approach in assisting them with national capacity-building and helping them to effectively address the gaps and challenges remaining in their policies.