

**Mr. Van Bohemen** (New Zealand): We, too, would like to thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women, and the three civil society representatives for their briefings. I would like to commend in particular Ms. Lusenge, Ms. Mohammed and Ms. Murabit for their direct messages and for the challenges they have laid out to the Council.

We thank and congratulate Spain and the United Kingdom for their initiative in convening this debate and for steering us through the adoption of resolution 2242 (2015) this morning. It is right that we take a fresh look at the situation of women and girls in the context of global peace and security for, as many have noted, 15 years have passed since resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted.

We can take some satisfaction that, over the past 15 years, we have made progress in ensuring that the women and peace and security agenda is taken into account in international conflict prevention and resolution efforts. That in itself is no small achievement. However, words in resolutions and other documents, even in mandate formulations, only take us so far. As we have heard today, we need to focus on practical steps to improve the situation for women on the ground, rather than just achieving rhetoric. The issue is not new, but the landscape continues to change and, sadly, is worsening. Rising violent extremism, increased numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons, and combatants who take no account of the civilians in their midst all affect women and girls disproportionately. The targeted use of sexual and gender-based violence by terrorist groups such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram, as part of a deliberate strategy, is a horrendous new development.

This only makes more urgent the need to deal with the threats posed by such groups and the underlying causes that give rise to terrorism. In that broader sense, the fight against terrorism and violent extremism is gender- and age-neutral, but we must face up to the reality that women and children suffer inordinately. That is a reality that must be confronted by the Council, by the General Assembly and by Member States. None of us can say that it is someone else's business. It is a problem we must all own. At one level, we need to bring home to people — whatever their country, religious belief or ethnicity — that the mistreatment of women and children, whether as a deliberate strategy or an incidental consequence of conflict, is utterly unacceptable. It will never be tolerated or accepted. Bullying, domination, coercion — whatever terms are used — are despicable. Those that engage in such behaviors should be exposed for the cowards that they are and they must be held accountable.

At another level, we need to move beyond a security driven approach to conflict resolution. The recognition of women's rights and perspectives must be a part of all programmes and policies for conflict resolution and post-conflict development. Women must be able to play a meaningful and integral part in conflict resolution processes and

outcomes. What does that mean in practice? It means that women must be advisers, negotiators, decision-makers and implementers, as well as receivers of a peace process, if it is to have any meaningful chance of success.

In our own small way, New Zealand has sought to play its part. We have had women in front-line peacekeeping roles since the year 2000. We are working to ensure that women are included at more senior levels in future peacekeeping operations. Our national action plan focuses on improving international deployment rates of senior staff within the New Zealand Defence Force and New Zealand Police to increase the numbers of women at decision-making levels in peacekeeping and assistance missions. We also recognize the importance of empowering local women and ensuring equality of access to justice. During our seven-year engagement in Afghanistan, New Zealand helped establish the first Afghan National Police women's committee at the Bamyán provincial police headquarters. Key purposes of the committee are to advocate for and support female police, and the development and implementation of a non-discrimination and harassment policies for all police employees so as to encourage the recruitment and retention of women police officers.

Another vital aspect of the women and peace and security agenda for the Organization, in particular, is to deal effectively with allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by our own people. It is a stain on the work of the United Nations and of the Council that allegations of such behaviour by United Nations peacekeepers continue to be made with a frequency and particularity that brook no easy dismissal. We have taken some satisfaction from the Secretary-General's strong statements that such behaviours will not be tolerated and that perpetrators will be held criminally to account. We agree that there must be a means for ensuring that troop- and police-contributing countries exercise criminal jurisdiction over their nationals participating in United Nations operations when such allegations are made. We also agree with the high-level advisory group that States that do not live up to this should not be allowed to participate in future peacekeeping operations. Most of all, we insist that effective action be taken. This, too, is a problem that we must all own if it is to be dealt with effectively.

In conclusion, I want to affirm that New Zealand — as the first country to recognize women's suffrage, at the national level — remains committed to achieving the reality that women must play a similarly equal role in efforts towards any lasting peace.