

Mr. Ybáñez (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*):

I wish to begin by thanking you, Mr. Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, President of the Security Council for this month, for having organized this open debate to allow the Council to address the complex subject of the maintenance of international peace in asymmetrical situations. I also thank all the briefers — Ms. Jean, Mr. Fedotov, Mr. Laborde and Mr. Boutellis — for their constructive ideas and suggestions.

I would also like to reiterate Spain's strong condemnation of the terrorist attack yesterday on a unit of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), close to the town of Douentza, and also the attack on 4 November in northern Mali. We would like to express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the Governments of Mali, Togo and France, and to the United Nations.

Spain fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the delegation of the European Union. We wish to make the following comments in our national capacity.

Peacekeeping operations are a crucial tool in achieving international peace and security, and they prove their worth every day. In recent years, we have seen important changes in the global security situation that have compelled us all to adapt. Peacekeeping operations have also been affected by those changes. We commend the progress made in implementing the recommendations for the reform of peacekeeping operations. However, the increasing complexity of their functions and of the security contexts in which new missions are deployed requires that we deepen our collective thinking about whether they are prepared to act effectively in the new contexts.

We agree with the observation of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see S/2015/446) that peacekeeping operations are not a suitable instrument for carrying out military counter-terrorist operations. At the same time, many peacekeeping operations are now deployed in operative settings where, in addition to the complexity of the political processes, there are considerable asymmetric threats and terrorism. Those are specific problems that cannot be ignored. We are all responsible for resolving them with a view to ensuring the protection of the contingents and making it possible for them to carry out their mandate effectively. To that end, we must begin by giving those operations the necessary specific capacities.

Recent experience has shown us that the intelligence and mobility capacities adapted to such contexts play a vital role, as do the means and technologies used to protect the contingents. They provide greater knowledge and enable us to anticipate threats and maximize the impact of their work. In that regard, we note the fundamental role that the All Sources Information Fusion Unit has played in the proper functioning of MINUSMA. Similarly, specific training is vital. Spain has offered, in a timely manner and on request,

training in protection against improvised explosive devices. The armies of numerous countries, such as Lebanon, Afghanistan, Colombia and Peru, have benefited.

A clear and precise mandate and rules of engagement are also necessary. We support the efforts being made by the Secretariat to modernize, streamline and adapt the procedures for bidding and force generation. It is a bottleneck that needs to be addressed immediately. The existing procedures are designed for a static model of peacekeeping operation and are applied with difficulty in highly volatile situations. That is why we commend the new initiatives of the Secretariat. Similarly, we need to make progress in decentralized management, delegating more authority to the heads of missions and giving them greater autonomy.

As we have previously said, the protection of civilians is an essential and complex task. Its success is fundamental for the credibility of the operations themselves and of the international community. We must focus on effective implementation of the mandates for the protection of civilians on the ground, which is made particularly difficult in the new security contexts. The use of force for self-defence and in defence of the mandate may require a robust mandate in those contexts in order to truly protect civilians. That could occasionally include a proactive, rather than a reactive, approach when countering serious and imminent threats. The autonomy of the Security Council to include the necessary measures in the mandates that apply in asymmetric contexts, in exceptional cases and always in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of peacekeeping operations, must be respected. Training of contingents in the work of protecting civilians is also vital, and it is an area that we must continue to stress. We must also improve the assessment mechanisms suited to such tasks.

All this requires a substantive and fluid dialogue with the troop-contributing countries. Fostering such dialogue was one of our campaign commitments when we joined the Security Council in January 2015, and it has been one of the priorities we have unquestionably worked for throughout our term.

Developing local capacities to combat terrorist threats, prevent radicalization or demobilize fighters is a key element. The United Nations police could contribute to supporting capacity-building for the police forces of the host country with a view to them operating more effectively and with increased security in contexts where asymmetric threats are present, and also to developing investigation capacities, such as forensics.

In addressing asymmetric threats, we cannot limit ourselves to focusing only on security. It is imperative that we have a comprehensive focus that goes beyond peacekeeping operations but should not be alien to them. Political solutions are a central axis of peacekeeping operations. Similarly, peacekeeping operations can exercise their mediation

and conflict prevention capacities, contributing to combating radicalization and violent extremism that can lead to terrorism.

To that end, we must insist on the need to maximize the capacities of mission personnel to interact with local communities and stakeholders. I believe that the police forces under military discipline, as is the case with the Spanish Guardia Civil, have a very useful role to play in that regard. The recent deployment of the Guardia Civil in the framework of the European missions in the Central African Republic has been a very positive and rewarding experience, and it benefited from that neighbourhood policing capacity to get closer to the local population.

It must not be forgotten that the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in this area is also crucial, given the positive role that women and women's organizations can play in combating violent extremism. Likewise, it would behoove us to bolster the coordination of our work in those areas, including programmes to prevent violent extremism, which are being undertaken by the various units of the United Nations in this context. Such coordination could enhance mission planning.

In the context of the ideas I have just presented, we hope that the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism will be implemented. It envisages integrating the prevention of violent extremism into the relevant activities of peacekeeping operations, in accordance with their mandates. As I stated at the outset, we agree that the peacekeeping operations are not a suitable tool for the military operations against terrorists, but it is clear — and I believe the debate is proof of it — that they have an important role to play in ending the scourge of terrorism. In such joint efforts, I can assure the Council that the international community will always have the active cooperation and the firm commitment of Spain.