

**Mr. Buffin (Belgium) (spoke in French):**

Belgium would like to thank the Russian delegation for convening today's debate. We would also like to thank Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN- Women, and Ms. Rita Lopidia, Executive Director of EVE Organization for Women Development, for their briefings and their presence today.

Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like to add the following observations in my national capacity.

At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to Ms. Fatoumata Siré Diakité, late President and founder of the Association for the Progress and Defence of Women in Mali, who passed away on 14 October. She was recognized as Woman of the Year in Mali in 2015 and was honoured by numerous awards. Ms. Diakité opened the way for Mali to recognize the rights of women in every domain — the fight against female genital mutilation, child marriages and gender-based violence. That woman serves as a model who can inspire all of us.

An open debate (see S/PV.7533) was held a year ago on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). It was the most well-attended debate in the history of the Security Council, with 113 speakers over a two-day period. The vast majority of Member States co-sponsored resolution 2242 (2015). That overwhelming participation clearly shows the importance that Member States attach to the women and peace and security agenda. It is indeed a matter that concerns us all. Our priority can now be summed up in three words: implementation, implementation, implementation.

Today's debate focuses quite rightly on progress achieved in implementing the commitments undertaken by Member States, regional organizations and the United Nations in the high-level review of women and peace and security in October 2015. Since the outset, Belgium has strongly endorsed the women and peace and security agenda. Currently, at the national level, all Belgian stakeholders are focusing their efforts on implementing our second national plan of action for the agenda. We are also in the process of drafting our third plan, in which we will give particular attention to women's key role in preventing violent extremism. We are ready to share our experience in this field and welcome with interest all the experiences and best practices that our partners are willing to share.

At the international level, Belgium works closely with multilateral organizations, such as UN-Women, to strengthen national capacities for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. In our current National Action Plan, we have identified three priority partner countries — Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mali — to which we provide financial assistance for the financing of specific projects. In Mali, together with UN-Women, Belgium co-chairs the donor group devoted to the issue of gender equality and has contributed €1.5 million to the programme to support the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in the peace process. In Afghanistan, Belgium has supported the UN-Women country programme with a contribution of €3 million. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Belgium has contributed €2 million for the implementation of the UN-Women programme entitled "Support for the law and the participation of Congolese women in the context of resolution 1325 (2000)".

At the invitation of Spain, Belgium became a founding member of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network. We thank that country for its initiative in that regard. We also wish to salute Spain and the United Kingdom as co-chairs of the

Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security for their invaluable contributions, and we are pleased to see that group of experts pursue its work on a consolidated basis.

The Russian presidency has also asked us to think about next steps in promoting the women and peace and security agenda. I would like to make three very concrete recommendations:

First, we urgently need to increase the active participation and representation of women in all political, justice and peace processes. Indeed, many studies have shown that women's participation increases the effectiveness of humanitarian aid, the credibility and quality of peacekeeping operations, the speed of economic recovery in post-conflict situations and the sustainability of peace agreements.

Secondly, in the fight against sexual violence in conflict situations, the fight against impunity is of paramount importance. This year is the tenth anniversary of the Brussels Call to Action to Address Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond. In the outcome document of that international symposium, held in June 2006, participants committed themselves to "intensify international, regional and national efforts to end impunity for perpetrators by strengthening the legal and judicial systems and by enacting and enforcing legislation, and provide national justice systems with the necessary resources to prosecute cases of sexual and gender- based violence".

Belgium supports that appeal with determination and actively contributes to current efforts to pursue the so-called Islamic State — also known as Da'esh — for its crimes, especially those committed against the Yazidi community.

Thirdly and finally, the women and peace and security agenda should be integrated into the thematic work of the Security Council on counter-terrorism, even when it comes to countries where groups such as Boko Haram or the so-called Islamic State are active, and into country strategies in line with commitments made in resolution 2242 (2015).

In conclusion, I would like to invite all participants to attend an event tomorrow morning entitled "From Local Action to Global Change — Bottom-up Approaches on Resolution 1325 (2000) from Iraq, Libya and Kenya", co-chaired by Costa Rica and my country, Belgium, and organized by the WO=MEN, Women Peacemakers Programme, PAX and Cordaid associations. It will provide an important opportunity to illustrate the important role of civil society in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.