

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Let me to join others in thanking you and in congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also commend you for convening this open debate on women and peace and security. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his very comprehensive report (S/2017/861), which highlights the main achievements and challenges in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. Similarly, on behalf of my delegation, I wish to thank all the briefers for their very insightful contributions to the subject matter under discussion today.

Botswana fully supports the clarion call by the Executive Director of UN-Women to increase women's participation across the peace and security continuum, including in conflict prevention and resolution. My country reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which this organ adopted 17 years ago. The resolution contributes significantly to efforts aimed at women's empowerment and participation in peace and security initiatives, particularly with regard to conflict prevention, peace and confidence-building measures. In furtherance of this noble objective, in 2015 a global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) was undertaken. In the same year, the Secretary-General produced his report on women and peace and security (S/2015/716). Above all, the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action was adopted.

The United Nations has made great strides in the promotion of the women and peace and security agenda through the establishment of UN-Women, which amplified women's voices and created momentum for women's leadership in the area of peace and security. In addition, the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the appointment of the Victims' Rights Advocate, the creation of the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of, and response to, sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations will go a long way in addressing the challenges faced by women in the field and also in combating and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. Through those initiatives, thousands of women and girls have been assisted in various countries around the globe.

Regrettably, women continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts, domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape and humanitarian crises. The participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peacemaking and peacebuilding still remains low at the national, regional and international levels, although studies show that women's increased participation would significantly contribute to sustainable peace and stability.

The international community has to continue to address social norms that perpetuate sexual violence and abuse against women, and promote respect for international human rights law and humanitarian law. In that regard, we emphasize the primary responsibility of States to comply with their obligations to end impunity and effectively use all available means to enforce accountability by prosecuting all perpetrators of such crimes and abuses. We call on States to take practical steps to address obstacles in women's access to justice, including by creating an enabling environment where women can easily report incidents of violence without fear or

intimidation. We furthermore urge all States to strengthen the capacity of their national criminal justice systems in order to facilitate victims' access to justice. Botswana recognizes the critical importance of gender equality and its mainstreaming in national development agendas, including of course in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In conclusion, I wish to applaud the Security Council for regularly convening open debates on women and peace and security since 2000, which has ensured that this matter remains at the top of the global agenda. We also support the work of various stakeholders towards the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda. I pledge Botswana's continued support for these endeavours.