

Mr. Blanchard (Canada):

I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, an informal network of 51 interested Member States chaired by Canada, representing all five regional groups of the United Nations. One year after the high-level review on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the Group reaffirms its unwavering support for the Council's work on this critical agenda.

The Group welcomes the establishment of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security as an outcome of resolution 2242 (2015) to facilitate a more systematic approach to the agenda in the Council and enable greater oversight and coordination of implementation efforts. We strongly encourage the Informal Expert Group to include in its work the regular participation of civil society and to share its conclusions with all Member States.

Recognizing that Member States and regional organizations are influential actors in the implementation of all women and peace and security resolutions, the Group emphasizes the importance of national action plans, with appropriate resourcing, monitoring and civil-society consultation. The Group welcomes the establishment, led by Spain, of the women and peace and security national focal point network, which will periodically share and exchange lessons learned and best practices. The Group also welcomes the establishment of the Global Acceleration Instrument as one avenue to attract resources, coordinate responses and accelerate implementation.

Noting the impact of inclusion, especially women's participation, on the durability of peace agreements, the Group stresses the importance of the meaningful participation of women at all stages of the peace processes and the elimination of barriers to their participation, as well as the mainstreaming of gender-specific language and the human rights of women in peace agreements. The Group also encourages the United Nations to include the women and peace and security agenda more systematically in its work on preventive diplomacy.

The Group emphasizes the indispensable role played by women in United Nations peacekeeping and underscores that their participation at all levels is key to the operational effectiveness of missions. The Group calls for the increased participation of women in peacekeeping at all levels, the integration of the human rights of women and a gender perspective into all aspects of peacekeeping, and the timely and appropriate resourcing and staffing of gender advisers at United Nations Headquarters and missions. The Group also calls for the full implementation of the commitments made at the United Nations peacekeeping defence ministerial held in London in September.

The Group expresses its profound concern regarding the impact of the unprecedented wave of forced displacement on women and girls. In this regard, it calls for the more systematic engagement of women and girls in the design and implementation of humanitarian assistance and early recovery programmes. In line with humanitarian principles, the Group further calls for the promotion of access to medical, legal, psychosocial and livelihood services to displaced persons, including sexual and reproductive health services, without discrimination.

The Group condemns in the strongest terms incidents of sexual violence in all conflicts, including the ongoing trafficking, rape and enslavement of Yazidi women and girls by Da'esh; the abduction and sexual abuse of women and schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Nigeria; and the ongoing use of sexual violence as a weapon of war in conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, among many

others. Such gender- based violence is a grave violation and abuse of human rights and international humanitarian law, and remains a barrier to the full achievement of gender equality, peace and development. We call for accountability for such crimes, including through the implementation of the international protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict, as well as greater support for survivors. Furthermore, the Group deplors the fact that the stigmatization of survivors exacerbates their marginalization and is a barrier to their full recovery.

Lastly, the Group of Friends condemns in the strongest terms cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations, and it reaffirms its full commitment to the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations with regard to all civilian, military and police personnel. We call on the international community to redouble its efforts to combat this scourge and welcome the recent efforts undertaken by Member States and the Secretary-General to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, to pursue accountability for perpetrators and to provide support to victims. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of resolution 2272 (2016), the appointment of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and the establishment of the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

(spoke in French)

Allow me to make some additional points as Canada's representative.

First, Canada supports the important work of UN- Women and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Secondly, the advancement of gender equality and the socioeconomic empowerment of women and girls are critical to all peace and development goals.

Thirdly, the United Nations and its Member States must do more to integrate women and peace and security issues in peace operations by ending sexual violence and abuse by peacekeeping personnel and by devoting more resources to gender adviser positions.

Fourthly, we must take a broad approach to ending gender inequality by involving men and boys as well as women and girls in the joint creation of a truly inclusive space.

And finally, Canada is implementing this agenda domestically by renewing our action plan on women and peace and security; ensuring the meaningful participation of women in our peace operations; incorporating a gender-based approach into military operations; and providing support to survivors of sexual violence in conflict zones.

Canada remains ready to work together to further advance the important resolution 1325 (2000) agenda.