

**Ms. Jovel Polanco (Guatemala)** (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a privilege to participate as Minister for Foreign Affairs in today's debate on such an important topic, and it is a happy coincidence that I am here today. I am the second woman to have been Minister for Foreign Affairs in the history of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which illustrates how things are changing in Guatemala.

In recent years, we have seen that the significant participation of women quantifiably strengthens protection efforts, accelerates economic recovery, furthers peacebuilding efforts and leads to sustainable peace. That is why, every year, the Security Council continues to pave the way for reducing the vulnerability of women and girls. All of that is based on the core premise of resolution 1325 (2000), which once again convinces us that, without security for women and girls, we cannot achieve lasting peace. Today, through this debate, we are providing added value to ensure the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

Guatemala fully supports the importance that the Secretary-General assigns to conflict prevention and early warning, which is the stage to which we must pay particular attention in order to prevent human rights violations of the most vulnerable — women, girls, children and adolescents.

Of particular concern is the fact that sexual violence continues to be used as an instrument of war to terrorize populations. We cannot allow it to be used to generate income through trafficking and sexual slavery, much less allow women and girls to be used as objects. We therefore strongly condemn all of those heinous acts, because, apart from constituting a clear violation of international law and international humanitarian law, it is a denial of human dignity. For that reason, we believe that it is of paramount importance to make progress in the fight against impunity, improve women's access to justice and strengthen the institutions of the justice system in the light of those atrocious crimes, both at the national and international levels.

Resolution 1325 (2000) has brought about important changes in the world, which has allowed us to recognize that the equality and empowerment of women and girls are critical for international peace and security. Together with the other seven resolutions that have been adopted by the Security Council on women and peace, they constitute powerful tools for the full exercise of women's rights, their access to justice and their equal participation in all decision-making, both in conflict and post-conflict situations and peaceful scenarios, which has led to substantive changes for consolidating the rule of law.

National action plans for implementing resolution 1325 (2000) constitute a powerful tool for advancing women's rights. In order to initiate, monitor and comply with international commitments for the search of international peace and security in gender issues, Guatemala has had a national action plan in place since July, which is one more achievement for the country in protecting the rights of women in conflict and postconflict situations.

Another important aspect is the role that women play in peacekeeping operations. Guatemala participates by deploying contingents in areas of armed conflicts, and therefore acknowledges the contribution of resolution 1325 (2000) in laying the foundations to incorporate a gender perspective into field missions.

Finally, my delegation believes it is necessary that joint efforts continue among States and the United Nations to support measures that increase the participation of women in peace processes, including in the contexts of peacekeeping and peace consolidation at all levels. Nowadays, inclusive processes should be the rule, not the exception.