

Ms. Bokhari (Norway):

I am honoured to be making this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway. I would like to thank all the previous speakers, and not least Ms. Lopidia for her powerful statement reminding us all of why we are here.

The eighth resolution, resolution 2242 (2015), on women and peace and security was adopted at last year's open debate (see S/PV.7533). Never before had so many countries sponsored a Security Council resolution. Never before had so many statements been made. We made commitments; we created expectations and we were right to do so, because by then we knew what we used to just believe. Where women are included and can exert an influence, we are more likely to reach a peace agreement and the peace is more likely to last. Where women are involved in peacekeeping, the operation enjoys more trust and is more effective. Where there is political will, sexual violence can be addressed, even in humanitarian crises.

Yet, in spite of our knowledge and experience, in spite of our commitments, we still have a long way to go. Women are still excluded from many processes that will decide their future. Women are still suffering abuse and even being targeted directly. We are still not tapping into the resources of 50 per cent of our populations when it matters the most. But steps have been taken. We welcome the new Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security that briefs the Security Council, and we welcome the national focal points network that has been formed to ensure greater accountability. We welcome UN-Women's new flagship on women and peace and security. And on the ground, in spite of the challenges ahead, the Colombia process has raised the bar.

From now on, women will expect to take part. Civil society will demand to be heard. More stakeholders will want to have a say, because it has been done before. And even though the Syria talks are not moving in the direction we hoped, the Geneva process has achieved something new: women and civil society are consulted regularly through innovative formal mechanisms. We now have very concrete examples of inclusion. We have been very happy to support these developments.

Inspired by a South African initiative, a Nordic network of women mediators was launched in November last year in Oslo. This means that Nordic women now form a part of a global network of women mediators, whose experience and competence we should draw on in future peace and security operations. To refer to the lack of competent women is no longer a viable excuse.

Finland and Norway are also cooperating with the Department of Political Affairs on the training of senior United Nations mediators. As sustaining peace is coming to the forefront of the United Nations peace and security efforts, the Nordic countries are working to ensure that the women and peace and security agenda is at the heart of this effort. Importantly, as we work to prevent and counter violent extremism, we support women's organizations and youth networks, because we believe that they are key players. We listen to them in our policy development and support them through concrete programmes. The Norwegian Prime Minister recently launched a new dialogue forum for women peacemakers on the front lines of violent extremism and policymakers at the highest level. Training is crucial to raise awareness and improve implementation of the gender aspects of peacekeeping missions. That is why the Nordic countries established the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations. In September, the Swedish Armed Forces issued a handbook for gender mainstreaming in operations, the very first of its kind.

In this context, we would also like to express our strong support for the proposal by Spain and the United Kingdom regarding a framework for a strengthened Gender Advisory/Women, Peace and Security Unit in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. This would enhance the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in both the short- and the long-term perspectives.

The Nordic countries deploy many women to United Nations peace operations: 35 per cent of the police officers deployed by Norway and 50 per cent of those deployed by Sweden are women and 40 per cent of all personnel Finland sends to civilian crisis management operations are women. Women made up 50 per cent of the experts deployed by the Icelandic Crisis Response Unit last year. This is because we know that gender balance makes our contingents better. We also support the African Union and several African countries in their endeavours to train more women and to ensure that their police forces are gender responsive.

Sexual violence destroys both individuals and communities and it undermines peace and development. That is why the Nordic countries are focusing on preventing and combating such atrocities.

We are engaged in the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies, which is currently led by Sweden. We work with the African Union and we support United Nations action, Justice Rapid Response and civil society.

The Nordic countries will continue to promote the 1325 (2000) agenda wherever there are discussions about peace and security, because we want peace and we want a peace that lasts.