

Mr. Bekkers:

I am very honoured to be here at Security Council this afternoon.

One of the greatest challenges of modern times is the normalization of violence at all levels — be it local, regional, national or international — as it poses a real threat to the lives of women and children. Indeed, attacks on women and girls, as well as the horror of sexual slavery, are sometimes part of the strategies used by combatants and violent extremist groups to achieve their ends. This morning we heard several dreadful examples of this fact.

Like you, Mr. President, we believe that this must stop, and resolution 1325 (2000) is part of the solution. I therefore thank you, Sir, for bringing us together today. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/822) and the Executive Director of UN-Women for her briefing.

The Secretary-General mentioned this morning that progress has been made. That may be true, but it is disappointing that implementation continues to lag. The Secretary-General mentioned that there is growing awareness, but that there is also a huge lack of funding for initiatives relating to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Our support for implementation must go beyond rhetoric. We need to walk the talk.

The women and peace and security agenda plays a central role in the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is the largest regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. Our efforts to prevent conflicts and resolve disputes peacefully are underpinned by our strong commitment to gender equality. Gender equality is a fundamental principle that cuts across the full gamut of security issues that the OSCE addresses.

The OSCE acknowledges the clear evidence that the participation of women in all phases of the conflict cycle — from conflict prevention and crisis management to conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation — is critical to the success and sustainability of peace processes and peacebuilding. Various speakers have shared much evidence on this point with us today.

For us, the OSCE, there is still a long way to go, but I would like to share a few of our achievements thus far. At this point, I would like to acknowledge and thank the representative of Germany for his comments as Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE.

First of all, the 63 existing national action plans, 28 are from the OSCE region alone, and several more are in the making. We continue to work with our participating States to improve their plans or develop new ones. Secondly, we have established within the OSCE a network of 60 gender focal points, covering our 17 field operations, three institutions and a secretariat to support the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) by participating States and to develop our own internal compliance, which is important to us.

Thirdly, reducing sexual and gender-based violence in conflict also means addressing violence against women and domestic violence in times of peace. That is another focus of our work. For example, in July we organized a conference on combating violence against women where we exchanged good practices and promoted the ratification of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

Fourthly, I would like to mention that the OSCE also recognizes the important role women can play in preventing radicalization and violent extremism. Accordingly, next month we will convene a conference on this topic that will bring together policymakers, experts and activists from across the OSCE region.

I would like to stress that, in everything we do, we strive to strengthen our cooperation and engagement with other international organizations and civil- society organizations. For example, we have developed close cooperation with UN- Women in Ukraine on the implementation of the new Ukrainian national action plan.

I have just mentioned some of our achievements, but we still have a long way to go. We are aware that we need to look inward as well. We need to create a better gender balance in our own OSCE structures, in particular in the politico-military dimension.

Before I conclude, I would like to commend the Spanish initiative to set up the women and peace and security national focal point network. We look forward to engaging with this forum.

You may rest assured, Mr. President, as may all others present, that the OSCE remains committed to the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), with a view to countering the normalization of violence, promoting peace and security, eradicating gender-based violence and improving the participation of women. We rely on the support of the Security Council as we strive to work in close cooperation with all stakeholders.