

Mrs. Pucarinho (Portugal): I would like to thank the French presidency for convening today's open debate, and the briefers for their very comprehensive presentations this morning.

I fully align my statement with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Portugal is encouraged by several very positive developments with regard to the women and peace and security agenda. This subject matter has become a consistent feature in Security Council resolutions and peacekeeping mandates, and gender-sensitive reporting is now a fundamental element in any comprehensive understanding of a given situation. We are also pleased to note that nowadays more women are taking part in peace talks, more peace agreements contain provisions in support of women's human rights, and more security sector personnel are trained to prevent and properly respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

Portugal also welcomes other important kinds of progress at the multilateral, regional and national levels, including the African Union and NATO's appointment of special envoys for women and peace and security and the increasing number of countries that have adopted national action plans for implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and the related resolutions that have followed. However, since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the context of peace and security and the nature of conflict have evolved, sometimes very dramatically. We are currently confronted with entrenched cycles of conflict and fragility, daily violations of human rights and humanitarian law, growing humanitarian crises and the mass-scale displacement of people and refugees, along with new threats, including the increase in violent extremism and terrorism, that affect women and girls in particular.

We understand that the women and peace and security agenda is a critical yet still underutilized tool for preventing conflict and shaping more effective responses to complex crises. That is why it is so essential to consistently build on the progress already achieved and scale up the commitment to this agenda.

Portugal has been a firm and consistent supporter of the women and peace and security agenda, as we consider it to be critical to ensuring the active and meaningful participation of women and girls in all aspects and stages of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict processes. It is an agenda of fairness and inclusivity that has been shown to contribute positively to the achievement of sustainable peace, besides offering multiple cross-cutting benefits, including strengthening United Nations peacekeepers' protection efforts.

In 2009, Portugal adopted its first national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). A second plan, adopted in 2014, will be in force until next year. We have remained consistently committed to promoting the women and peace and security agenda and raising awareness of the importance of establishing and fully implementing national action plans for resolution 1325 (2000) in all relevant international forums, including the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and

NATO. We reiterate our pledge to continue conducting training programmes on gender equality and violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings, for national personnel and members of the armed and security forces assigned to international peacekeeping missions.

Portugal fully supports the Secretary-General's policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, and highly welcomed his initiative to organize the high-level meeting on that topic in September. Portugal took part in the high-level event, has signed the voluntary compact to end impunity and strengthen measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, joined the Circle of Leadership and contributed to the United Nations Trust Fund for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

To conclude, 17 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we realize that much has been achieved, but also that we have a long way ahead, with no end in sight, to definitively ensure the gender perspective and women and girl's participation in all stages of peace processes, including in prevention and disarmament, protection in displacement settings, peacekeeping, policymaking and reconstruction. No concrete effort should be spared to move forward and advance this meaningful agenda. Portugal is complying at the national level and stands ready to extend his cooperation at the bilateral and international levels to promote the women and peace and security agenda.