

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Chef de Cabinet for the Secretary-General, Ms. Viotti, for her statement and for the annual report on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) (S/2017/861). We also welcome the insightful contributions that were made by Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, as well as by Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas, representative of civil society, and Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

The year 2017 will mark the seventeenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), which formally acknowledged the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly being targeted and women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes. The resolution remains a significant milestone in the progress towards women's full enjoyment of their rights and equality throughout the world, a world in which for the first time women are given a significant and necessary voice in the field of peace and security.

Despite that honourable objective, much more needs to be, and must be, done. Women remain excluded within peace processes, including in the drafting of peace agreements, and their involvement in United Nations peacekeeping within the military, police and civilian components is limited. In addition, the contribution of women and girls to the peacebuilding process remains undervalued and under resourced, leaving a vital tool regarding transformative change and sustainable peace underutilized.

South Africa is committed to contributing to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). My country's history illustrates the relevance of the role that women play in achieving and maintaining peace and security in a post-conflict environment. South Africa's women have been at the forefront of efforts to drive reform and to develop and advance responsible policies and legislation aimed at advancing the role of women in society. Today, at the level of political decision-makers, 42 per cent of South Africa's representatives in Parliament and 41 per cent of the national cabinet are women. That illustrates the progress that is being made towards a 50-50 representation in both houses of Parliament and the cabinet. Furthermore, both the speaker of the national Parliament and that of the house of Provinces are women.

South Africa provides training for women mediators in the African region. Such mediators will make up an African women mediators' network that can assist in peace negotiations. In addition to that, the South African National Defence Force operates the Peacekeeping Training Centre in Pretoria, where women peacekeepers from South Africa and throughout the region receive training. It must be stressed that the National Defence Force is highly aware of the fact that gender issues need to be highlighted, which is reflected in the fact that at present 30 per cent of our National Defence Force comprises women.

Additionally, we recently held the third Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum on Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Africa. That initiative includes participants from across the African continent and inspires women to play more important leadership and peacebuilding roles than they have traditionally played, without necessarily being part of an official delegation.

That Forum also provides a platform that women can use to share their experiences, reflect on existing policies and challenges, and thereafter make recommendations to national, regional and international institutions.

This year saw the adoption the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July, and we are pleased that South Africa was one of the first countries to sign that Treaty on 20 September. South Africa wishes to warmly congratulate the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons for being awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize. That well deserved and timely award is a clear recognition of the role played by civil-society organizations in the area of nuclear disarmament in pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons. Allow me to pay special tribute to women's organizations for their active role in the abolishment of nuclear weapons, including the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom based in Geneva.

In order to strengthen the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the resolutions that build upon it, including resolution 2242 (2015), my country continues to engage with representatives of civil society and academia to find ways to further empower women and remove obstacles that impede their participation in peacekeeping missions and mediation efforts on the African continent. Furthermore, we fully support the various solidarity missions to Africa that have been led by UN-Women and the African Union recently.

South Africa looks forward to further cooperation and the sharing of experiences with Member States, UNWomen, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other partners that seek to further incorporate gender perspectives and the concerns of women in order to enhance the sustainability of peace and security in all conflict situations. We support the slogan HeforShe.