

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka:

It is an honour to address the Security Council and to present the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/822) on women and peace and security on his behalf. I thank the presidency of the Russian Federation for presiding over today's debate and for proposing to review the implementation of the commitments made last year by Member States, regional organizations and the United Nations.

Last year's open debate (see S/PV.7533) had the highest number of participating speakers in the entire history of the Security Council. More than 180 political, financial and institutional commitments were made in the course of the high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000), and the new resolution 2242 (2015) was adopted. Such commitments are important and can make a difference. They must therefore not simply be plans on paper; we must turn them into action. Last year's global study on women and peace and security was also welcomed as a guide that can keep our work in moving ahead. Today, therefore, we urge Member States, regional organizations and the United Nations to do more to take the study's recommendations forward and turn the commitments that were made into concrete action. The Council is well positioned to ensure we have greater accountability to one another for our commitments.

UN-Women is already responding to many of the findings and recommendations of the global study and the appeal issued in resolution 2242 (2015). We are serving as the secretariat for key new mechanisms, such as the Council's new Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women and Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action. We are pleased to announce that we will also perform a secretariat function in support of the new network of national focal points.

And we are responding to last year's call for greater visibility and leadership in this area. We are therefore mobilizing high-level champions who can amplify our voice, message and presence everywhere, and ensure that the agenda on women and peace and security has the broadest possible support all over the world. We are contributing to the implementation of the peace operations review, in collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs. We are collaborating closely with the Peacebuilding Support Office and other partners in order to ensure that gender is fully reflected in the agendas on sustaining peace and on youth and peace and security. I congratulate the Peacebuilding Commission on adopting a gender strategy, a first among our intergovernmental bodies. We are also working hard to ensure that the United Nations approach to preventing and countering violent extremism engages women's leadership, and that it respects and promotes women's rights.

While there is still much more to do, this year's annual report includes several markers of progress. For the first time, the Peacebuilding Fund exceeded the 15 per cent target for funds intended directly for gender equality and women's empowerment. The percentage of female beneficiaries of temporary employment programmes has doubled since 2013, reaching 46 per cent in 2015. The percentage of peace agreements that include provisions on gender equality has increased from 22 to 72 per cent in the past five years. In the past few months we have seen several gender justice milestones in both national and international courts. In Guatemala, a national court prosecuted and convicted people on charges of sexual slavery during armed conflict, a first for a domestic court anywhere. In the past year, the International

Criminal Court secured its first conviction for sexual and gender-based crimes. And in Senegal, the trial of Hissène Habré saw the first conviction of a former Head of State for personally committing rape as an international crime.

But we have many challenges remaining. The report also notes that there are many areas of concern and stagnation. The percentage of women beneficiaries of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes has declined markedly, decreasing to 12 per cent. In countries in conflict and post-conflict that have no quotas, women occupied a mere 11 per cent of seats in parliament, and their political participation has not improved significantly over the past five years. In the 12 months since resolution 2242 (2015) urged that women in civil society be asked to present briefings during the Security Council's country-specific deliberations, that commitment has not materialized.

Countries in conflict and post-conflict situations perform significantly worse in the areas of maternal mortality and education for girls. The Security Council is very aware of the atrocities committed against women and girls in war-ravaged countries. We are still counting the days since the Chibok girls were abducted. We remain concerned about the many who have not been found, in Nigeria or elsewhere. Although we welcome the fact that 21 of them have returned, we will continue to count the days until all are released. There have also been extensive reports of abuses committed against Iraqi and Syrian women and girls trapped between Da'esh and the military operations against it, including in the current situation in Mosul. Elsewhere, South Sudanese women and girls are being raped by armed actors with total impunity, as we will no doubt hear this morning from Ms. Lopidia.

In addition to such examples of extreme violence against women, we have countless examples of women's extreme political marginalization in public life and decision-making, which must also be of concern to the Council, in view of its considerable power. In the first year of the Informal Expert Group, members of the Security Council discussed four country situations — Mali, Iraq, the Central African Republic and Afghanistan. In Mali, of the 62 Malian members of the committees in charge of monitoring and implementing the peace agreement, only one was a woman. The representation of women among the committees' international mediation members is also dismal. In Iraq, there was not a single woman in the four command cells for administering people's return to liberated areas, chaired by the Government and members of the security forces, tribal sheikhs, imams and notable community members. Since the transition ended in the Central African Republic, women's representation in national institutions has again dropped, to 8 per cent of members of parliament. In Afghanistan, the international community's huge investment in the security sector could offer women much more. Women make up less than 1 per cent of the country's armed forces and less than 2 per cent of its national police.

In many of those contexts the United Nations itself shows a similarly poor representation of women. In the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, women account for only 13 per cent of staff overall and 11 per cent of leadership positions. Such stark deficits in our own gender balance cannot continue. We need an intervention that can turn the tide. We pay a daily price for this issue in our reputation and effectiveness in the areas where we provide services. It is a challenge that the incoming Secretary-General will have to face in order to build on what has been started. We welcome his commitment to taking concrete measures to achieve gender parity within the United Nations. That would be a breakthrough that could result in a much more formidable United Nations by building on achievements so far.

Finally, I would like to end by recognizing our current Secretary-General's contribution to women and peace and security. The United Nations system has made important progress on that agenda under his leadership. We know that the issues are close to his heart and that he will continue to champion them in his future roles and whatever his new capacity will be, with the support of UN-Women. UN-Women thanks him for his commitment to women and peace and security, and we thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to brief the Council today.