

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (spoke in Spanish):

First of all, I would like to thank the Russian presidency for having convened today's open debate and for the concept paper (S/2016/871, annex); Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the briefing on his annual report on women and peace and security (S/2016/822); the Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo- Ngcuka, for her briefing; and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security and South Sudan civil society representative, Rita Lopidia, for her valiant plea.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement of the Group of Friends of women and peace and security to be delivered by the representative of Canada.

Resolution 1325 (2000) was a question mark with regard to the women and peace and security agenda by acknowledging the disproportionate impact of war and armed conflict on women, boys and girls. Today, 16 years after its adoption, the growing incidence of terrorism, the nature and proliferation of conflicts, as well as the persistent non-compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law by the parties in armed conflicts merely serves to intensify the above-mentioned impact by increasing the suffering of millions of innocent people. Resolution 1820 (2008) was the first to recognize sexual violence as a tactic of war.

In spite of the efforts made at the national and international levels, women and girls continue to be subjected to deliberate attacks and are victims of rape, gender-based violence, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, genital mutilation, human trafficking, forced marriages and pregnancies and sexual exploitation and abuse. The victims of sexual violence in conflict situations endure irreversible physical and psychological trauma and, on many occasions, suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/ AIDS. That situation is of particular concern in the case of forced pregnancy, given the impact of such diseases on the health of mother and child and the stigmatization and social exclusion they face and of which they are the primary victims.

Attacks on hospitals and humanitarian personnel are not the only form of violations of international law but they prevent the victims of sexual violence, as well as newborns and pregnant women, from having access to health services and sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion services as well as the medication needed to ensure their survival. I urge parties to armed conflict to comply with their international obligations, in particular with the provisions of resolution 2286 (2016), whose implementation is crucial to alleviating the suffering of the weakest.

Likewise, we must deploy additional efforts to ensure the sexual and reproductive rights of women in conflict situations, as well as provide comprehensive, non-discriminatory health-care services and psychological support to victims. Similarly, we deem it crucial to step up the efforts of the United Nations as a whole and of Member States to prevent and respond to sexual violence against women in refugee camps, which currently poses a major challenge.

Uruguay would like to stress the link between sexual violence and the maintenance and financing of terrorist organizations, since the latter use women and girls as prizes or incentives to recruit men and boys and thereby force them into prostitution. Given this cruel reality, we deem it crucial to reaffirm the collective political will and commitment to fight sexual violence, mobilize additional financial resources so as to create programmes that are capable of responding to the needs of victims, and ensure

effective research and data-gathering procedures as well as access to justice at the national and international levels, including the International Criminal Court.

Similarly, we call for progress in the implementation of the commitments undertaken at the international level to eliminate all forms of human trafficking and discrimination due to race, colour, gender, language, religion, political views or any other characteristic or social condition.

We are deeply concerned by the impact of armed conflict on the education and in particular the literacy of girls, whose schooling is disproportionately impacted. We are also deeply dismayed at the impact of forced child marriage on the education of girls, who are excluded from formal education and in many cases forced to do domestic work. According to the report of the Secretary-General, in conflict situations girls are 90 per cent more likely not to receive secondary education than in countries that are not so affected. Appropriate access to educational and political systems and the economic empowerment of women must be guaranteed in order to be able to make progress with respect to these goals.

Women must be part of the solutions to these global challenges. Their inclusion in peacekeeping and peacebuilding as well as in decision-making processes is not only fair but also necessary, and it is crucial to take measures and actions that are sustainable over time and properly reflect the challenges on the ground. Experience has shown that women are relevant players in the prevention and resolution of conflict. They play an important role in the peacebuilding process, the rebuilding of societies and the promotion of new approaches with a gender perspective. In this framework, we believe that it is necessary to provide opportunities that enhance the potential of women in these areas and ensure their planned and equitable access to decision-making posts.

The participation of women in the military and police components of peacekeeping operations has a positive effect on the population, since it reduces the undue use of force and makes it possible to become closer to the local population, in particular when there have been cases of the sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls.

Despite all of the foregoing, very often we face serious difficulties in enhancing the participation and action of women in areas related to peace and security. The number of women who participate in peace negotiations is very low, as it is in terms of the personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations, both military and police. According to the report of the Secretary-General, in December 2015 women made up only 4.7 per cent of all deployed military experts, 3.2 per cent of military troops and 16.9 per cent of police officers.

In this context, Uruguay reaffirms its commitment through strengthening measures such as maintaining an above-average percentage of women deployed in peace operations; continuing with the mandatory training of military troops that are to be deployed on issues of the prevention of and response to violence, sexual exploitation and abuse; and continuing with the zero-tolerance policy in cases of misconduct, sexual violence or any other violation of the code of conduct. Likewise, we reiterate our commitment to the zero-tolerance policy established by the Secretary-General and our readiness to continue to ensure that those who carry out acts of sexual exploitation and abuse are held accountable.

We are aware of the fact that the problems associated with women and girls due to armed conflict are very extensive and complex and require multifaceted efforts to be able to address them in a coherent and comprehensive manner. In this respect, we

welcome the efforts of civil society and acknowledge in particular the synergies that are possible in the context of the various global tools available in this respect such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals, the value of exchanging experiences through the national focal point network established by Spain, and the work of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security.

Also crucial is the quality and quantity of the information that reaches the Security Council, and, in this respect, we commend the work done by the Secretary-General in including specific information in his country situation reports urging fine-tuning of the relevant mechanisms. The efforts made to ensure the greater participation of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as to adopt measures that reduce the disproportionate impact of conflict on women, have not had the desired results or allowed us to respond effectively to the challenges on the ground. That is why we deem it crucial to go beyond any approach that leads us to exclude a segment of the population that is particularly vulnerable to the effects of conflict from the solutions and measures that are to be adopted. Women are key actors precisely because they are direct victims and because they make up approximately 50 per cent of the civilian population affected.

In this respect, Uruguay is considering the holding of an Arrria Formula meeting in December to address the possible synergy between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the women and peace and security agenda.

We call upon the Secretary-General-designate, the United Nations as a whole and all Member States to continue to give pride of place to the women and peace and security agenda and all that it entails.

It is frustrating that in the twenty-first century, after so many discussions at the international level, this reality has remained unchanged. We must act with a focus on the challenges we are facing, which require the more equitable participation of women at all levels in peace and security discussions. We cannot disregard this reality. We must undertake commitments and devise solutions that are based on inclusion, not exclusion. Millions of people are waiting for us to act.