

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): I would first like to join previous speakers in commending the French presidency's initiative in convening today's open debate on the critical issue of women and peace and security.

I would also like to align myself with the statements delivered earlier by the representatives of Canada and Turkey, respectively, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the MIKTA group of Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey and Australia.

In 2000, the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) laid a robust normative foundation, on which we have made considerable progress, for strengthening the protection of women in conflict and facilitating women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Despite that progress, however, a wide gap still remains between our goals and the reality on the ground. Civilians, particularly women and girls, continue to get caught up in armed conflicts in many parts of the world. That is also a historical issue, and much work remains to be done on it. The effects of sexual violence perpetrated in the past can persist in its victims as deep trauma. With that in mind, I would like to highlight three points as we strive to implement and further strengthen the normative frameworks of the agenda on women and peace and security.

First, we must coordinate our efforts better if we are to prevent women from falling victim to violence. The Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2017/249) shows that terrible sexual violence continues to occur in conflict and postconflict situations. We must scale up our collective efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflicts and hold all perpetrators accountable for their heinous crimes. We continue to be disturbed by occasional reports of alleged crimes committed by peacekeeping operations personnel, despite the fact that intensive efforts have been made to combat the problem. We should not tolerate any form of sexual exploitation or abuse by United Nations peacekeepers. In that regard, I commend the Secretary-General's determination and welcome his initiatives aimed at stamping out such crimes, including the voluntary compact and Circle of Leadership.

Secondly, our professed goal of increasing the participation of women in peace efforts must be translated into concrete action. That was highlighted by the 2015 global study on women and peace and security and its follow-up resolution 2242 (2015), as well as 2016's twin resolutions on sustaining peace — resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 70/262. Noting the variety of initiatives that have been undertaken at the national, regional, and international levels, I urge all Member States to continue such endeavours so that they can all lead to tangible results.

The Republic of Korea, for its part, adopted its own national action plan on women and peace and security in 2014, and has been scaling up its efforts to increase women's participation in peace efforts ever since. As a result, we have met the 15 per cent target for women peacekeeping officers, and will continue to increase women's participation in the future.

Thirdly, we must ensure that the ongoing efforts to reform the United Nations peace and security architecture contribute to the women and peace and security agenda. I welcome the fact that, in his recent report (A/72/525) on restructuring the United Nations peace and security pillar, the Secretary-General once again emphasized his determination to ensure women's meaningful participation in all peace efforts at all stages of the conflict cycle. I also commend his efforts to promote women's participation in peace processes and to enhance gender equality, especially through the selection process for high-level United Nations positions.

I look forward to hearing more details from the Secretary-General on how the women and peace and security agenda will be promoted in the new architecture's peace and security pillar. As the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), I am committed to working closely with him in that regard. When I assumed the chairmanship of the PBC earlier this year, I announced that I would build on the Commission's ongoing work to promote gender dimensions in peacebuilding efforts. For the first time since its inception in 2005, the PBC has appointed gender focal points to implement the gender strategy it adopted in September 2016, with Bangladesh and Canada currently serving as those focal points.

The PBC has been increasing women's participation in peacebuilding efforts at the country-specific level as well. Most recently, during the PBC Organizational Committee meeting on Solomon Islands, which was attended by the country's Prime Minister, PBC members engaged with a representative of the country's Young Women's Parliamentary Group. The Chairs of the country-specific configurations of the Commission have also been engaging with women's groups and individuals in their work, in both meetings and visits to the countries on their agenda. The PBC will continue its ongoing efforts to further promote gender perspectives in sustaining peace.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the Republic of Korea's commitment to promoting the women and peace and security agenda both in its national capacity and as Chair of the PBC.