

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka: Last year, the Secretary General identified four priority themes common to all three reviews on peace and security that were undertaken in 2014. This Council debate addresses the relationship between two of the four themes, specifically the need to focus on the prevention of violence and to pay attention to the critical importance of gender equality.

The critical role of women in conflict prevention is increasingly being acknowledged even though it is still rarely visible. It is often missing from discussions about peace and security that take place at the highest levels, which is why this briefing is most appreciated. Today, I am pleased to share specific examples of conflict prevention led by women from across the African continent. These examples are about the deliberate prevention of violence while ensuring gender equality, and are not unique to Africa. Women in the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America have made similar contributions.

I will start with women's situation rooms, which monitor and prevent election-related violence. In the past five years, women's situation rooms have been established in Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Uganda. The model is being replicated in a growing list of countries across the African continent, with our support. These mechanisms are established during the electoral period to train and deploy female observers and monitors, receive and analyse hundreds of complaints and reports of violence or intimidation, and refer those to the relevant authorities for follow-up. Often, nationally renowned women are mobilized to engage with heads of political parties, security sector institutions, and leaders of faith-based entities to respond to situations as they arise. They save lives, diffuse and de-escalate dangerous situations. They support women candidates and fight discrimination against women in the electoral process and gender-based election violence and harassment.

Our research also shows that women play a key role in de-escalating tensions and preventing radicalization in their families. In Mali, the most important influence for the successful reintegration of many ex-combatants has been the women in their families and communities. In the broader Sahel region, the income status and resilience of women have been boosted by programmes that address the gender gap in access to land and other productive assets. It is that status and resilience that have provided a safeguard against radicalization and economic, political and climate shocks.

In poor areas in Kenya, women's organizations are dedicated to working to identify and prevent the spread of radicalization. Mothers are using their influence to help their sons and their peers to resist recruitment by armed groups. Their success saves lives. In Burundi, hundreds of women mediators are working tirelessly to address local conflicts, and they prevent and stop the escalation of tensions. Women's empowerment contributes to our defence against militarism and violent extremism, and requires our greater support and investment.

In 2015, we learned from the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which highlighted that countries with lower levels of gender inequality are less likely to resort to the use of force, and that the security of women is one of the most reliable indicators of the peacefulness of a State. We also learned that the spending patterns of women contribute directly to post-conflict social recovery. Women are the first to notice attacks on their rights and freedoms and the militarization and radicalization of individuals in their families and communities. They possess important insights and intelligence that are key to decision-making.

Revamping and strengthening the prevention work of the United Nations must include more frequent deliberations of the Council that are informed by the perspectives and analysis of women on the ground. That is why I am pleased today to brief the Council alongside Ms. Anyang today, who is one

of our civil society partners in resilience and conflict prevention among women in South Sudan. The practice of hearing from civil society representatives is now common in the thematic debates of the Council, and that is important. However, it should be extended to consultations on country-specific situations, the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies, and during Council visiting missions.

For example, the Counter-Terrorism Committee should regularly consult with women's organizations to ensure that our efforts to counter violent extremism are not shutting down space and funds for the civil society actors who are key to prevention and saving lives. Council members should demand a robust gender analysis in the reports they receive and in all atrocity prevention efforts. The new Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security, which held its first meeting last month, is an important step in ensuring consistent and quality information flows to the Council. UN-Women is proud to serve as the secretariat for that new Group.

Existing early warning systems should find ways of linking directly with women-led monitoring and prevention initiatives at the local level, which are happy to facilitate. Women are critical to intelligence-gathering. Women need to be resourced so that they do more. The commitment to allocating at least 15 per cent of peacebuilding funds to gender equality and women's empowerment must become a reality, and extended to all efforts at preventing and countering violent extremism. Women's organizations must receive the political and financial support needed to engage in violence prevention, mediation, and diplomacy. Investing in gender equality as part of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see resolution 70/1) is the best recipe for structural, long-term prevention.

The work of women peacemakers takes many forms in Africa and elsewhere, but their commitment is consistent, dependable and universal. It is also directly linked to strengthening efforts in conflict prevention, which is so needed in the face of today's complex peace and security environment.