

Mr. Medan (Croatia): At the outset, allow me to thank the Spanish presidency of the Security Council for convening this high-level debate on women and peace and security. We also welcome the adoption of the new resolution 2242 (2015), on women and peace and security, earlier this morning, which we were also glad to sponsor.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union earlier, and I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

We welcome the high-level review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) as an invaluable occasion to reflect on the current status of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, and to make concrete commitments to its full realization. Croatia can attest from its own experience to the devastating effects of war on women and girls, and attaches particular importance to their protection and empowerment. Although we know that women are more likely to suffer in times of conflict, by no means does that imply that they should be reduced to being victims only. Indeed, women are powerful agents of peace and security, and their political participation is a path towards development, as well as for good governance and democracy. That is why we need more women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in the maintenance of a sustainable and inclusive peace.

Despite the development of policies, action plans, guidelines, programmes and training in the 15 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), women continue to face significant barriers to successfully participating and playing roles in those processes. The number of women participating in decision-making

in the peace and security spheres worldwide remains unacceptably low, while grave abuses and violence against women, including sexual violence and rape, continue to be devastating. The rise of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism only further aggravates the atrocities and human rights violations women and girls are subjected to. Therefore, the protection of women in armed conflict, parallel to the enhancement of their contribution to peace processes and in rebuilding their communities, still remains a crucial challenge.

Our focus must now be directed at bridging the gaps between the global, regional and national policies related to the women and peace and security agenda and the realities of the situation on the ground. First and foremost, more needs to be done at the national level. The implementation of the resolution has to be country-driven, and Member States need to take responsibility for its success by ensuring that it is integrated into national policies.

I am pleased to say that Croatia has taken steps to integrate the gender perspective into its national foreign and security policy, into its national policy for the promotion of gender

equality and its first national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Croatia is currently developing its second national plan, which is expected to be adopted by 2016. The new plan will cover both our domestic and international activities by setting out and strengthening specific measures in the prevention and protection spheres, and with regard to female representation in decision-making activities and processes related to security and peacebuilding.

In that context, with a view to further advancing the women and peace and security agenda, Croatia commits to further promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the context of its foreign, security and defence policies at all levels. We also commit to nominate women for top-level positions in international and regional peace and security organizations. Similarly, we intend to focus specifically on the gender dimension of Croatia's involvement in peacekeeping missions and operations abroad and to actively promote the participation of female officers and military experts. We will also attach specific importance on gender-related elements in predeployment training for civilian and military personnel, including prevention and response to sexual violence and on a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

We will take measures to tackle the underrepresentation of women in political decision-making in order to achieve more balanced participation by women and men in Croatian political bodies and institutions at all levels. We commit to increase the number of female heads of Croatia's diplomatic representations. We will accord high priority to the visibility of gender and women and peace and security-related policy and action at national and local levels, as well as ensure coordination among the relevant national actors.

We will also support the broad participation of civil society and women's organizations in all activities related to the women and peace and security agenda. We will promote the women and peace and security agenda within other international organizations and initiatives, in particular within the Equal Futures Partnership during Croatia's chairmanship in 2016. And we commit to providing development and humanitarian assistance with an integrated gender perspective.

Let me conclude by underlining that what we have heard today is a common understanding that the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) should be viewed as much more than just a stocktaking opportunity; it is first and foremost a vision-making one. We have to work tirelessly so that our joint vision expressed today translates into a reality that unleashes the potential of each and every woman to achieve a world free of conflicts.