

Mrs. Quiel Murcia (Panama) (spoke in Spanish):

I wish to begin by expressing our appreciation to the Russian presidency for its initiative of convening this timely open debate on women and peace and security.

Panama endorses the statement delivered by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the Human Security Network. We underscore the significant value of resolution 1325 (2000), which was adopted unanimously in 2000, as the first instrument to establish the relationship between the experiences of women in conflict and the international peace and security agenda, thereby focusing attention on their disproportionate impact on women. Today more than ever before, that resolution and subsequent Security Council resolutions are of great relevance, given the increasing violence against women and girls carried out by extremist groups that threaten their rights, dignity, integrity and lives.

The increasing role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in United Nations peacekeeping operations was enshrined in resolution 2242 (2015), which further encouraged women to take on greater leadership roles and promote their rights and called for efforts to turn plans made on paper into action, as we have heard this morning from the Executive Director of UN-Women.

We welcome the recommendations contained in the September report (A/71/398) of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and the Secretary-General's call for the implementation of a zero-tolerance policy in response to instances of misconduct, in particular comprehensive proposals on prevention, enforcement and remedial measures to promote greater accountability, including his commitment to make public misconduct by United Nations staff. Today's multiple briefings, in particular the testimony of civil society representative Ms. Rita Lopidia, demonstrate that, unfortunately, the impact of armed conflict on women is disproportionately greater and thereby makes them more vulnerable and lacking sufficient protection.

Panama is firmly committed to promoting and protecting women's human rights. That is why we attach particular interest to the initiatives of UN-Women, of which my country is a member of the Executive Board, and to the Justice Rapid Response mechanism and the alliance of women seeking accountability for sexual and gender-based violence. The 2015 global review of the women and peace and security agenda highlighted the need to incorporate a more significant role of women in the fight against terrorism and radicalization, in which gender equality is assuming greater prominence for the fight against that scourge.

Violent extremism has intensified and degenerated into the worst forms of violence against women, including sexual violence used as a weapon of war, thereby returning us to a time that we thought had been overcome by humankind. States must therefore strengthen collective efforts, including national plans and strategies to promote the increased participation of women in all stages of the peacebuilding process, as well as in post-conflict reconstruction.

I stress the significance of Spain's initiative to create a network of focal point groups on women and peace and security in September, which focuses on the urgent and crucial question of promoting women's leadership role and rights. The role that women can and should play in conflict prevention and resolution and decision-making processes aimed at sustainable peace is fundamental. That is why it is essential to empower women globally and continuously, as recommended in the report of the Secretary-General.

Women's inclusion and equality are essential elements of the equation in achieving the development we want. We need to end the exclusion of 50 per cent of the world's population and recognize the active, vital role of women as agents of change, whose participation at all levels is an undeniably positive element favouring peaceful and constructive action.

The equal participation of 100 per cent of our population in every single step towards lasting peace and security will ultimately free up human potential to resolve the issues we face — all we need is the will to act. Given the current situation of ever-increasing global challenges, it is unacceptable to continue debating questions involving women's rights as leaders, or to hold high-ranking positions or to equitably participate at all levels of political, social or economic life.

Finally, the measures we take and implement today to defend the rights of women and girls will be steps towards saving humankind. That is in our hands.