

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation welcomes the convening of this open debate on the topic of women and peace and security, 17 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which marked the first milestone of truly taking into account the issue of women in peace efforts. It is a topic that the Security Council has elevated to the front ranks of priority so as to better fulfil its primary mission of conflict prevention and resolution, in accordance with Charter of the United Nations.

The acuteness and multidimensional scope of the issue are clear in the statements that we have just heard. On that note, I would like to thank the briefers: Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General; Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie; and Ms. Charo Mina-Rojas, civil society representative.

This is a good opportunity for my delegation to reiterate that Senegal, like the other African countries and organizations, remains firmly convinced that, for the maintenance of international peace and security to be effective and lasting, we cannot overlook the role and invaluable contribution of women, who are the main victims of all kinds of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. The simple, mathematical reality should compel us to ensure that the majority of the world's population, comprised of women, is more included and empowered so as to stabilize the world and bring about lasting prosperity

From the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is unanimous agreement that countries and human communities are more peaceful and prosperous when women enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men. Persistent insecurity and inequality in the social, political, economic and even environmental spheres negatively affect women, and thus hinder gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's specific experiences and lives in times of conflict and in times of peace, nor their skills, are still not sufficiently taken into account in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, reconciliation, reconstruction and peacebuilding.

I hope that today's debate will contribute to other stages in the effective integration of women's rights and gender equality in public policy and in the minds of all individuals of every social status and every cultural affiliation. It is in that respect that I welcome the 2017 report of the Secretary General (S/2017/861), whose recommendations call for greater commitment, particularly in the five key areas — women's effective participation in peace efforts, the protection of women's fundamental rights during and after conflicts, planning with accountability for results, strengthening gender architecture, and the funding of priority programmes based on the women and peace and security agenda.

Nevertheless, the balance sheet is still mixed, despite the considerable progress made here and there, as there are still significant challenges in many areas, including participation in mediation and the deployment of women in Blue Helmets.

Fortunately, the establishment of structures such as the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, the Women and Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in order to bolster active regional and national mechanisms, lends renewed hope to the idea that the international community could achieve gender equality in its efforts to build lasting peace in the world.

Africa is the impetus behind resolution 1325 (2000), which was a resolution of Namibia. The continent is prey to several conflicts, but it participates in the implementation of this agenda through several operational mechanisms and legal instruments conducive to policies that could lead to the effective contribution of women in the maintenance of peace and security. Those include the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; the African Decade for Women, initiated by the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union; and the appointment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission of a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security — all of which led to the creation of the African Women Leaders Network. I take this opportunity to reiterate the full support of the Government of Senegal and to pay tribute to those brave women who, through their actions, are contributing significantly to the development of public policies, including those related to the quest for peace.

At the subregional level, Senegal, alongside the other member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has adopted the Dakar Declaration on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It has thereby committed decisively to strengthening the role of women, especially in mediation, the promotion of a culture of peace and the facilitation of early warning systems. As a result, a number of initiatives have been taken, such as the establishment of a gender unit within the executive secretariat of ECOWAS, the establishment of a gender development centre, the adoption of a strategic gender plan and the drafting of a gender policy.

At the national level, Senegal has integrated all international, regional and subregional instruments into its legal arsenal and internal institutional architecture, in that ensuring the right conditions for the full implementation of the international commitments it has undertaken regarding the rights of women and girls. In that spirit, the Government of Senegal has adopted and implemented a sectoral gender strategy, including the institutionalization of gender in Senegalese defence and security force interventions. As a result, 113 Senegalese women are currently deployed in peacekeeping missions. Senegal's resolute commitment is a natural extension of its gender policy, which has already led to the adoption of a law on full gender parity in all elected and partially elected posts at both the national and local levels.

Like the Government, Senegalese civil society organizations remain very active in advocating for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) by building the capacities of women and girls in the field of peace and security.

As successful and proactive as those strategies, policies and measures of integration and empowerment of women have been, many challenges still remain. Therefore, we must strengthen cooperation among States if we are to effectively implement national action plans developed to ensure the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In that connection, I would like to draw attention to the specifics of the Sahelo-Saharan region, where we see alarming trends in violent extremism and terrorism and transnational organized crime, along with concomitant trafficking — the primary victims of which are women and children.

We must promote synergistic action among the Security Council and other United Nations bodies, including the various entities on the ground. For example, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, created by Council resolution 2242 (2015), and the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa would benefit from improved coordination in order to identify and share lessons learned and best practices in the integration of the women and peace and security agenda into conflict prevention policies.

I would like to conclude by endorsing the statement of Secretary-General António Guterres regarding the participation of women in peace processes,

“[a]t this time, the setting up of inclusive processes, with effective participation of women, should be the rule, no longer the exception.”

What better way to help women and girls around the world — by restoring the dignity that has been stripped from them.