

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (spoke in Spanish):

Argentina aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Government of Uruguay for taking the initiative to organize this debate and for circulating the concept note (S/2017/402, annex) to guide our discussions. We are also grateful for the statements of the Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mr. Adama Dieng; and Ms. Mina Jaf from Women's Refugee Route, on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Argentina strongly supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. It welcomes the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249) and fully endorses its recommendations aimed at preventing, combating and eliminating all forms of sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations and in the actions of terrorist groups and violent extremists and aimed at seeking justice and reparation for victims.

In that context, allow me to express the Argentine Government's gratitude for the work done by the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her arduous and dedicated efforts over the past five years, during which time she achieved a great deal, including the establishment in 2015, through General Assembly resolution 69/293, of 19 June as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. In this context, I recall that, on 20 June, Argentina will organize, together with the Offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and an interregional group of Member States the second formal observance of that International Day. We also welcome the appointment of the new Special Representative, Ms. Pramila Patten, and we wish her every success in the complex task that lies ahead and assure her of Argentina's unwavering support during her mandate.

The increasing use and threat of crimes of sexual violence against women, girls, men and boys by non-State armed groups, terrorist groups and violent extremists and other State actors as a strategy of recruitment and financing, with the aim of terrorizing, intimidating and stigmatizing specific groups, namely, women, children, religious minorities, LGBT people, displaced persons and so forth, constitute the most serious international crimes. Various international tribunals have established sexual violence as an act of torture, a war crime, a crime against humanity and an act of genocide. Such crimes must be prevented and punished in accordance with the law and we must make use of available tools and mechanisms, including sanctions, and referring cases to the International Criminal Court.

We must continue to join and redouble the efforts of all actors involved in order to find effective and immediate solutions on the ground aimed at ensuring respect for international law and to prevent, combat and eradicate crimes of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations and the trafficking in persons. We must bring the perpetrators of such war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice; and we must protect, contain, assist and

reintegrate victims of such violations through the provision of multisectoral and multidisciplinary assistance services with a gender perspective and reparation measures and protect their dignity and human rights.

A key element in preventing sexual violence in conflict is addressing the risk factors and underlying conditions that leave some groups more vulnerable to sexual violence, compounding their victimization, trauma, marginalization and stigma. It is also essential to ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes be held accountable, while improving capacities for documenting and investigating cases of sexual violence and improving cooperation and the exchange of information and best practices in the areas of research, documentation, identifying and assisting victims, extradition and legal aid. In that regard, we would like to highlight the work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and the roster of experts on sexual and gender-based violence overseen by UN-Women and Justice Rapid Response.

Such goals should continue to be our priority and be taken into consideration by the Security Council when defining the mandates of its peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as in its peacebuilding efforts, by incorporating specialists on gender and sexual and gender-based violence into its missions and mediation teams, as well as including specific related provisions and commitments in peace and ceasefire agreements and increasing the percentage of women in peacekeeping forces and military and police contingents.

We should nonetheless not omit to mention the cases of sexual exploitation and abuse that continue to occur in peacekeeping missions. This is a very serious situation that poses a major challenge to the legitimacy and future of such missions and the image of the United Nations. In that regard, Argentina continues to strongly support the Secretary-General's policy of zero tolerance, as well as the various measures proposed in his reports and included in resolution 2272 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 71/278, among others, as well as the work on coordination and prevention of Ms. Jane Holl-Lute, Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

In conclusion, we reiterate that sexual violence in conflict represents one of the most atrocious and terrible violations of human dignity and an undeniable and persistent threat to international peace and security. That is why we must continue to work together to ensure the protection, promotion and full enjoyment of their human rights by all men and women, boys and girls, on an equal footing, and to redouble our commitment to preventing and eradicating such crimes, while holding their perpetrators to account and making their victims the focus of our efforts.