

Ms. Flores Herrera (Panama) (spoke in Spanish):

Allow me to express our appreciation to the Republic of Uruguay for taking the initiative to propose today's timely debate.

We would like to emphasize the normative value of the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the first instrument to establish the causal relationship between the experiences of women in conflict and the international peace and security agenda and to draw attention to the disproportionate impact of conflicts on women. Today, more than ever, that resolution and those that have followed it are particularly relevant.

Violence against women is increasing and worsening, in particular when carried out by violent extremist groups as a tactic of war and terrorism to attack their fundamental rights, human dignity, personal integrity and their supreme right to life.

Increasing the role of women in conflict prevention, in the resolution of conflicts and in United Nations peace operations, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2242 (2015), is an encouraging new sign when it comes to increasing the leadership role and the rights of women. However, it is urgent that we implement effective strategies and fully integrate the gender perspective in our agenda.

We welcome the appeal made by Secretary-General and the efforts of the Organization to implement the zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse carried out by United Nations peacekeepers. In that regard, we need to improve the mechanisms for prevention, reduce the time of investigations and, ultimately, eradicate this unacceptable behaviour.

Panama is firmly committed to promoting and protecting the human rights of women. We attach particular importance to initiatives undertaken by UN-Women, such as Justice Rapid Response and the Women's Alliance in Accountability for Sexual Violence and Gender-Based Violence.

We welcome the efforts of the informal group of experts on resolution 2242 (2015), on women and peace and security, and of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We also underscore the adoption, as part of Council sanctions regimes, of criteria for identifying individuals or entities for their role in the promotion or carrying out of sexual violence.

The manifold armed conflicts that we are facing, unfortunately, show that women continue to be a group especially affected by sexual violence. In recent years we have seen how sexual violence has become part and parcel of the ideology, operations, strategic objectives and financing of non-State armed groups, terrorist groups and violent extremists.

The review of the women and peace and security agenda carried out in 2015 served to underscore the need to include the significant role of women in combating terrorism and radicalization. That gives new meaning to achieving gender equality in this struggle.

Violent extremism has increased and has degenerated into the worst forms of violence against women, using sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism, as a form of religious and ethnic persecution and as a means of interrogation, funding and recruitment. There is therefore an obligation on the part of States to bolster collective efforts and preventive and corrective measures at the national and international levels. In addition, that requires a focus on all stages of the peace process and the post-conflict reconstruction.

We must establish socioeconomic reintegration plans in communities of survivors of sexual violence, including children born as a result of this violence, so that women and children do not become double victims. We must also consider establishing effective judicial mechanisms to punish the perpetrators of these crimes and to support victims in a way that recognizes their rights to truth, justice and reparation.

I would like to underscore the significant importance of historic rulings of the International Criminal Court, such as the 2001 Bemba case and 2017 Ntaganda case, which consolidate the status of sexual violence as a war crime and crime against humanity. However, due to the complementary jurisdiction of the Court, we must also promote the effective national-level implementation of existing instruments on this issue, including adopting strong internal measures to prevent and combat sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts.

In conclusion, Panama believes that the role that women can and must play in preventing and resolving conflicts and in the building and decision-making in sustainable peace processes is fundamental. Thus, the equality and the empowerment agendas take on greater meaning and constitute a global commitment. Our strategic considerations to combat sexual violence against women in situations of conflicts must be based on international law and be inspired by the best interests and well-being of all humankind.