

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing and presiding over today's debate. Your presence is a real show of Spain's leadership on the issue of women's empowerment. I thank the Secretary-General for his continuing leadership in the area and Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka for her briefing and her stewardship of UN-Women. My deepest respect and admiration go to Ms. Lusenge, Ms. Mohammed and Ms. Murabit for the extraordinary work they do and for taking the time to come and speak to us today. Their bravery in pushing women's empowerment in their own societies leaves us in awe, and their bluntness today in describing the dashed hopes of many over the 15 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) should motivate us all.

Fifteen years ago, the Council adopted a resolution recognizing that the inclusion of women's voices in decision-making on peace and security leads to more equitable, sustainable and resilient results. That is not a theory; it is a fact. The global study commissioned by the Secretary-General on the resolution's impact and the challenges we still face offers ample evidence of that. One qualitative study found that peace processes with female participants demonstrated a 20 per cent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least two years. In the Security Council, we are not faithfully advancing international peace and security if we are not doing everything possible to ensure that women are included and empowered in peace processes.

As others have noted today, the past 15 years have seen some measurable progress. That is evident in the advances of individual countries, particularly in the area of women's participation. When resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted, women in Afghanistan could not leave their homes unaccompanied by a man. Today, Afghanistan has two women governors, four women Cabinet members, 150 women in the judiciary and a 28 per cent representation of women in Parliament. Progress is also apparent in the greater involvement of women and greater attentiveness to gender issues in peace processes. Over the past 15 years the percentage of peace treaties referencing women has increased nearly two and a half times, to 27 per cent, and, as others have noted, during the ongoing peace talks in Colombia, a dedicated gender subcommittee was established to ensure that gender issues were considered and women's rights recognized.

But the numbers and stories also reflect how far we still have to go. The number of women members of parliament around the world has roughly doubled over the past two decades, but the current proportion is still a mere 22.5 per cent. In my country it is at a record high of just 19 per cent. Even in the case of the Colombian peace negotiations, there is nothing close to gender parity, and the increased inclusion of women came after active organizing and lobbying by female leaders. Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland and current Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Climate Change, recalls a female leader in civil society once telling her that "a typical peace process involved bad

men forgiving other bad men in fancy hotels in front of television cameras”. Not every aspect of that image rings true today, but it is still entirely too familiar.

Moreover, women continue to be harassed, assaulted and murdered for daring to speak up or get involved. Last year a prominent, remarkable woman named Salwa Bugaighis, a friend and colleague of Ms. Murabit who had previously resigned from Parliament in Libya to protest its lack of women, was murdered in her home on election day. Just yesterday, an Afghan woman named Toorpaki Ulfat, a human rights defender and employee of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, was killed as she headed to work in Kandahar. Around the world, too many other women continue to be harassed or imprisoned by their Governments for doing nothing more than speaking up on behalf of their communities, including 18 of the 20 women profiled last month by my Government on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration.

In the face of such continued challenges, there are two areas I want to highlight today in which the Council should play a particularly active role. The first is peacekeeping. As the Secretary-General has reported, the insufficient number of women peacekeepers

interferes with core mission tasks such as protection and engagement with female members of communities. That is why, at last month’s peacekeeping summit, President Obama called for more women leaders in critical mission roles. It is why we will all benefit from the fulfilment of the pledges made by several nations, including Rwanda and India, to contribute more female troops and police.

In addition to more women wearing blue helmets, we must take every possible step to root out sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, which is too prevalent. Countries must train their peacekeepers better in order to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, and must hold any soldier or staffer who commits such crimes fully accountable. As President Obama said last month and as the Secretary-General has made clear, there should be zero tolerance for them. Yet too often today their perpetrators enjoy impunity.

Secondly, the Council must ensure that women are full participants in combating the threat of violent extremism. That is essential not just because women and girls are often the victims of groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, it is because defeating those groups will require women’s leadership and active involvement as community influencers and leaders, whether in village councils or here in the Security Council. That fact has been recognized by some diplomats, leaders and States; the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, has worked actively with civil society and women’s rights organizations during his consultations and negotiations. The Iraqi Council of Ministers endorsed an emergency plan in May that made reference to resolution 1325 (2000) and called for measures to address the needs of

women and girls in conflict situations and facilitate their involvement in post-conflict reconstruction.

Well beyond ensuring the Council's engagement in those two core areas, there is much more that each of us here can do. In all of our respective roles as States Members of the United Nations, national representatives and individual leaders, we must look inward. Within the United Nations family we must continue to integrate and act on the goals of resolution 1325 (2000). That includes supporting the Secretary-General's commitment to elevating the work of senior gender advisers and including more women in the senior ranks of the United Nations. It means ensuring that all United Nations agencies and bodies engaged in peace, security and development take responsibility for integrating women's voices into their work, and that should be measurable.

As national representatives, we must hold our own Governments to account. In the United States, our Government has been moving forward with its national action plan. The Department of Defense, to take just one example, has taken important steps, including through integrating objectives relating to women and peace and security into its policy strategy and planning. At the State Department, 35 per cent of mission chiefs are now women — an improvement of the 10 per cent level of 20 years ago, but still not yet half.

As part of this national action plan, we are also assisting other nations in their own efforts, and today I am pleased to announce new commitments to that end totalling \$31 million. To describe just a few examples here, that includes more than \$40 million for initiatives to protect women from violence and promote their participation in peace processes and decision-making, as well as more than \$8 million to implement United States Secretary of State Kerry's accountability initiative to fight impunity for sexual violence in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. Another \$1 million will be allocated to a justice initiative based in South Kivu province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It seeks to educate 50,000 women on their human rights and how to use basic judicial procedures.

Finally, as individual leaders we must look inward to see what more we can do in our own positions. For women, and particularly for men, it is not enough to be passively supportive of women's participation. Whether it is pressing one's capital about progress on one's national action plan, or pressing for women's participation in internal decision-making processes, all of our support must be active and vocal.

Just last week, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the four leaders of the Tunisian Dialogue Quartet. One is a woman — Wided Bouchamaoui. She is not a politician or a lifelong activist; she is a businesswoman and the head of a Tunisian employers' union.

Her contributions and the accomplishments of the Quartet are a timely reminder that even in the midst of grave national crises, there is still reason for hope, above all when women are able to join men at the table. As she put it last week, “We did it together”. I would only elaborate, “We will do it together, or we will not do it at all”.