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Seventy-second year

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Thursday, 10 August 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt)

Members:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Italy	Mr. Lambertini
Japan	Mr. Kawamura
Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
Russian Federation.	Mr. Nebenzia
Senegal	Mr. Seck
Sweden	Mr. Skau
Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Rycroft
United States of America.	Ms. Sison
Uruguay.	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Nigeria to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tête António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, and to give her the floor.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on my recent visit to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This undertaking, from 19 to 27 July, was the first of its kind — a high-level mission focused entirely on women and peace and security and development. I was pleased to be joined by the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, both of whom are here with me today, as well as Ms. Bineta Diop, the African Union Commission's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. We were four African women from two organizations, visiting two countries, with one goal — advancing peace by advancing the equality, empowerment and well-being of women. This reflects both the Secretary-General's vision and the Security Council's agenda, as embodied initially in resolution 1325 (2000) and reaffirmed most recently in resolution 2242 (2015).

The mission also deepened the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union (AU), as we work together to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063, as well as the accompanying Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed in April on the initiative of the Secretary-General. I am

pleased that the Permanent Observer from the African Union will be briefing the Council alongside me today, reinforcing the joint nature of our mission. In that broad context, I would like to share with the Council some of what we saw and heard, as well as some thoughts on what we must do now.

In both countries, we met with Heads of State, ministers, donors, diplomats, faith leaders, Parliaments and the United Nations mission and country teams. We made a point of spending the lion's share of our time with the women and girls most affected by conflicts, including in visits to camps for internally displaced persons. While each country is unique, the situations share some commonalities. Both have dismally low levels of women's participation in politics and are experiencing conflicts marked by extremely high levels of sexual- and gender-based violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sexual violence is widespread. In northern Nigeria, abductions, forced marriage and the use of women as suicide bombers have taken a terrible toll, and in the camps, sexual exploitation, including in the form of sex for food, is a new and alarming trend. The international community must better understand the role of women in development and peacebuilding, together with the gender dimensions of conflict, if our responses are to be effective.

Both countries are also in the grip of grave humanitarian crises. In Nigeria, the eight-year conflict in the North-East has generated a risk of famine, displaced 1.9 million people and left 8.5 million in need of assistance. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 7 million people need assistance and 3.8 million are displaced, the largest internally displaced population in Africa and one of the worst such situations in the world. Those dire circumstances are being made worse by a large gap in humanitarian funding, including the issue of failures to meet the commitments made at the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region. There is an acute need for sustained and scaled-up funding to avert famine in Nigeria and address the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Beyond those immediate concerns, since both crises are rooted in conflict, poverty and political challenges, they will require regional political solutions and integrated responses that cut across historically siloed approaches.

Let me turn now to some of the specifics of each. In Nigeria, we were moved by our meeting with the Chibok girls — facilitated by the Honourable Minister of

Women Affairs. Their remarkable strength as survivors, rather than victims, is inspiring. Many are receiving an education and psychosocial support to prepare them for reintegration. But thousands of other young women who have been abducted and returned, subjected to sexual violence and affected by conflict in other ways have yet to receive adequate support. We also interacted with displaced women and girls who are facing exploitation and abuse in the camps. We held meetings with women's leaders who underscored the need to address mental health and women's empowerment.

I commend the Governments of the Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria for their efforts to promote stability, including through the Multinational Joint Task Force within the Lake Chad Basin regional cooperation. International support will continue to be crucial in addressing the root causes of the crisis in those very complex situations.

I am also pleased to note that since our visit, the Acting President of Nigeria has established a judicial commission to investigate alleged violations of human rights by Nigerian security agencies, and to recommend ways to prevent such violations. I commend that initiative and encourage the relevant authorities to include sexual- and gender-based violence within the commission's work. The United Nations stands ready to support that important effort and also to reinforce protection measures for displaced women and girls.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains complex and volatile, with State and non-State armed actors alike perpetuating violence and the illicit flows of natural resources and deepening political tensions, including over the delayed elections. There are real risks of increased political instability and deepening crises if the 31 December 2016 agreement becomes irrelevant.

We are all aware of those and other challenges, yet we also see a real opportunity to get the country on track towards stability. In all of our meetings, we emphasized the need to respect and implement the 31 December agreement and the willingness of the United Nations to provide its support. That endeavour will require further investment, not a scaling back of our capacities and resources. While it is imperative to ensure the most efficient use of available resources, particularly in a fiscally constrained environment, it is equally critical that mitigating measures are taken to avail vulnerable populations of the level of protection they need. In that

respect, I commend the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for the steps taken to mitigate the possible impact of the closure of its bases in some locations and for its efforts to develop and implement a more holistic approach to the protection of civilians.

We commend the efforts of the Government, including through the appointment of a personal representative of the President on sexual violence and child recruitment, to decrease incidents of conflict-related sexual violence committed by the security forces and to take real steps towards delisting from the Secretary-General's reports on conflict-related sexual violence. Those efforts must continue, along with our pledged support, until we reach zero.

At the time of our visit, the electoral commission had registered more than 80 per cent of voters. That number now stands at more than 90 per cent, with registration expected to be accelerated in the Kasais following the calming of tensions. Of those registered, 48 per cent are women, placing the country in the same bracket as more established democracies, such as the Solomon Islands and Paraguay. The collection of sex-disaggregated data is itself commendable, as is the provision on gender parity in the constitution, which should now be supported and translated into law.

In that regard, we had lengthy conversations with President Kabila, who has committed to releasing an elections calendar and to holding elections that are violence-free and Congolese-led, but where international observers will be welcome. We welcome that commitment and look forward to the early release of that electoral calendar.

The United Nations-AU delegation met with women in Goma who were being moved as a result of the closing of an internally displaced persons camp where they had lived for years in barely life sustaining conditions. Despite those hardships, some women did not want to return to their communities without assurances that a key means of support in the camps — microcredit — would continue to be available. While it was not possible to delay the closure of any of the camps, I am encouraged to note that our intervention made it possible for some of the women to remain in local communities and to continue to be supported through the micro-credit programmes that have been facilitated by UN-Women. For these women, security is a matter of financial empowerment. I thank

the donors that are generously supporting these efforts and call on all to do even more.

We also met with women who have no choice but to cook with coal in their tents, at great risk to their health and that of their children. Those tents were their only shelter and coal was their only accessible mode of sustenance and heat.

We asked about the future of those women and their families upon the closure of the camp and were informed that the United Nations does not have the funds or capacity to shift from humanitarian assistance to support host communities or the reintegrated individuals. While we may debate the humanitarian-development nexus philosophically here in New York, without resources flowing to both sectors simultaneously and a real investment in early recovery, we can neither sustain peace nor prevent future gender-based violence. In that spirit, I encourage donors to respond to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's reintegration challenges at this time — based on need, and need alone.

While in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, our delegation was briefed on MONUSCO's investigation into the murder of two experts working for the United Nations. The report on that horrific incident, which I strongly condemn, is to be published shortly, and I would like to reiterate the need for thorough investigations and justice for the perpetrators of that crime. The United Nations will continue to support that effort until justice is served.

I would like to thank the many dedicated men and women with whom we met during our important and productive journey, in particular my colleagues in MONUSCO, especially the women, whose work was greatly appreciated by all we met, as well as the United Nations country team in both countries — and within them UN-Women, whose efforts to support the empowerment of women is so crucial. I am most grateful for the invaluable contribution from to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

I would also like to express my gratitude and thanks to the African Union as a partner in progress. Its partnership is invaluable as we strive to continue to work together to stabilize the region, to advance the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative, and to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

One message resounds most — investing in women and girls must be central to our efforts in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and beyond if we are to have sustainable peace and development. Giving special consideration to the context will be key to the responses that deliver the right results. We look forward to working with national Governments, regional organizations, civil society, women and girls themselves and international partners to deliver results that will advance peace, development and dignity for all.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. António.

Mr. António: Since this is the first time that the African Union (AU) is taking the floor at the Security Council since the start of the presidency of the Arab Republic of Egypt, let me join the voice of the African Union in commending you, Sir, and supporting the activities of your presidency for the month of August.

I would like to sincerely thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her very detailed briefing on the mission, for her vision, her commitment and contributions to finding, in concert with the African Union, sustainable solutions for a peaceful and stable Africa. The Deputy Secretary-General, together with the African Union Commission's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop; the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; and the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, played a key role in the realization of the joint United Nations-AU high-level solidarity mission in Nigeria and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that took place from 19 to 27 July 2017. Ms. Bineta Diop would have loved to join today's meeting but due to unforeseen circumstances, she could not be here with us today.

The joint United Nations-African Union (AU) solidarity mission, which was carried out in the context of the High-Level Women Leaders Forum for Africa's Transformation that took place in New York from 31 May to 2 June, allowed both organizations to better assess the positive role that women can play to advance peace, security and development. The joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission also reinforced our understanding, at both the policy and operational levels, that it is possible

to have significant and positive impacts on the lives of vulnerable populations only if and when the African Union, the United Nations, Governments, civil society organizations and women and youth all join together in their efforts. We witnessed that throughout the mission, joint efforts engendered unprecedented perseverance for the realization of common objectives.

Africa is a strategic region for the stability of the world, and women and youth play a pivotal role in the promotion of peace, security and development. The African Union Commission remains a key partner of the United Nations for the implementation at the continental level of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

The African Union is also at the forefront in the implementation phase of the landmark Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which was signed in April by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat. The landmark document recognizes two strategic points for collaboration between the AU and the United Nations. The first point that the document stresses is that “African peace and security challenges are too complex for any single organization to adequately address on its own”. Secondly, it notes the need for the African Union and the United Nations to “work together to identify and respond to indicators of potential conflict and plan for prevention”

It is in that spirit of prevention and intensified collaborative efforts that the Chairperson of the African Union Commission delegated the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to the joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission, thereby reaffirming his commitment to the advancement of the role of women in peace processes across the continent.

The changing nature of conflicts has highlighted alarming challenges, including the worsening humanitarian situations to which the Deputy Secretary-General referred, as well as increased violent extremism. Dire humanitarian challenges, such as those seen in the north-east of Nigeria and the East and Kasai regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, significantly impact the well-being of communities, particularly of women and girls. Furthermore, armed groups such as Boko Haram are increasingly using young girls as agents of violence and suicide bombers. Just days before

the visit of the joint United Nations-AU delegation to Maiduguri, four Boko Haram suicide bombers killed 19 people in a series of attacks. It was later reported that one of the four suicide bombers was a young woman. In order to curtail such a worrisome trend and avoid marginalization that can lead to exclusion and radicalization, there is a need to support the social and economic empowerment of women.

To date, there is no solution to the problem of transnational actors constantly changing their ways of operating, except by effectively and rapidly adapting to the changing conflict patterns and dire consequences of vulnerable populations. In that regard, the African Union strongly condemns the continued violations of women’s and children’s rights, the erosion of their well-being and all forms of violence perpetrated against them in conflict-affected countries or countries emerging from conflict.

It is no coincidence that the joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission was undertaken under the theme, “Revitalizing women’s participation and leadership in peace, security and development”. Both the AU and the United Nations have recognized the importance of women’s participation and leadership in peace, security and development initiatives. The mission brought greater visibility to the role that African women can play in advancing prevention, peace, security, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Additionally, the high-level delegation offered a unique platform to bring the voices and experiences of women on the ground to the ears of those in positions of leadership of their respective countries, including Heads of State, Foreign Ministers and Members of Parliament. The delegation was able to receive first-hand information from women and young women leaders actively working on the ground, related to a number of key needs, including reinforcing ground actions for peace, security and development, empowering women through quality education and capacity-building for employment, and offering them the necessary infrastructures to support their physical and mental rehabilitation in countries enduring conflicts or emerging from conflicts.

The African Union continues to support the rehabilitation and empowerment of internally displaced persons and survivors of sexual violence. In the context of the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin Region held in February, the AU Peace and Security Council, in its session on 19 July, called on the international community to provide necessary

assistance that is commensurate to the needs of affected people in humanitarian emergencies. It is also necessary to ensure rapid disbursement of pledges made in order to alleviate the current humanitarian crisis.

In that spirit, the African Union commends the new United Nations Humanitarian Fund of over \$10.5 million, which has been allocated to help women, children and men in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance, in line with the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund. We acknowledge that more joint humanitarian efforts and assistance remain to be delivered in conflict-affected regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the international community.

The African Union will continue to work closely with the United Nations to support conflict-affected populations, including displaced and host communities, that are suffering from peace and security crises, humanitarian emergencies and development deficits, including the understated risk of famine. In that regard, the AU commends the unprecedented efforts of its member States and first responders to refugee and humanitarian crises, such as the crisis in Uganda.

The joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission highlighted key recommendations that are essential if we are to achieve overall sustainable peace, security and development. First, it is necessary to enhance focus on enabling the empowerment and return of internally displaced persons and refugees, particularly women and children. Secondly, there is a need to facilitate the stabilization of countries facing challenges related peace and security by providing them with the necessary human, financial and expert support, particularly through enhanced women's participation. Thirdly, we must enhance access for humanitarian organizations, in accordance with the African Union Peace and Security Council's mandate and peace and security architecture. Finally, it is necessary to enhance women and youth's effective participation in conflict prevention, mediation, electoral processes and decision-making in order to allow them to act as agents of peace.

As the African Union and the United Nations seek to underline the role of women in peace, security and development in Africa, I would like to stress that the joint United Nations-AU solidarity mission also took place in the spirit of the priority actions set for the initiative of the African Women Leaders Network, which was launched by the African Union Commission in partnership with United Nations Women and Germany.

The African Women Leaders Network aims to bolster the leadership of women in governance, peace and security, all in the interest of transforming Africa. The Network represents an entry point for an enhanced United Nations and African Union partnership and a specific contribution to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which was introduced by Namibia in 2000. The tripartite partnership of the African Union, UN-Women and Germany behind the African Women Leaders Network has set the goal of generating sustainable and concrete actions for women in Africa, in line with African Union and United Nations commitments to prevention and delivering tangible solutions on the ground.

The action plan of the African Women Leaders Network reinforced the need to create a fund within the platform that can address concrete issues on the ground, such as the capacity-building of women and young girls through education and the reinforcement of educational infrastructure by building schools and support centres. The need to strengthen educational, physical and mental support systems proved vital during the fruitful exchanges of the high-level delegation with women and young girls on the ground. Education and capacity-building will offer the necessary platform for women, girls and communities at large to heighten awareness on gender-based issues, including on addressing sexual violence.

Our joint findings on the ground have confirmed what women and girls affected by conflict and humanitarian tragedies are able and willing to manage camp activities, which serve as support systems for other survivors and assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration processes through microfund financing and peer support. The solidarity mission in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo allowed for the conclusion of discussion on the importance of the capacity-building of institutions and justice systems in countries in conflict or emerging from conflict. The African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security will brief the African Union Peace and Security Council on the specific outcomes of the joint United Nations-African Union solidarity mission.

In closing, it is recognized that no single organization can on its own ensure global peace and security. There is therefore a need for the African Union and the United Nations to work closely to achieve peace and security in Africa. Our efforts must continue to be based on comparative advantage in the pursuit

of strategic objectives. In that regard, the emerging strategic partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the areas of peace and security need to be reinforced, based on the creative reading of the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, to allow the African Union and its regional mechanisms to fully play their role as integral components of collective security.

Lastly, the African Union recognizes the often ignored drivers of conflict, such as gender-based violence and gender inequality. It therefore reaffirms its strong commitment to focus on preventive strategies, as inscribed in the African Union Charter, which reinforce the empowerment of women and tackle the sources of instability but inflict pain and violence on our continent.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. António for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank Ambassador Tête António and, above all, the Deputy Secretary-General for sharing their analyses of their important visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to northern Nigeria.

May I also commend the work of UN-Women and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who also took part in the visit. Together, they have really brought home to us the horrific, disproportionate impact that both those crises have on civilians and in particular, on women and girls. It is an impact that the Council knows only too well, following our visit to the Lake Chad region in March, but I am sure that none of us who were on that visit will forget the stories of anguish that we heard then. We heard so many of them from mothers or daughters who had lost everything — their children, families, homes and hope — all to Boko Haram.

Sadly, it seems that those stories are still being told. Despite the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and Governments of the region, the suffering continues, with over 2 million people still displaced in the Lake Chad region — over 96 per cent of them because of the insurgency. Similar stories can also be heard loudly and clearly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which now has the highest displaced population in Africa. The reports emanating from the

Kasai regions should make us all sick to our stomachs. They speak of mass graves, brutal killing and maiming, including of women and children. They tell of rampant sexual violence. Over 1,000 cases have been responded to since the crisis began last year, with the actual number of cases likely to be far higher.

That has sparked a crisis that has left 400,000 children at risk of severe acute malnutrition. Those two situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria are different in many ways, and yet they are product of the same vicious cycle. It is a cycle of instability — one that breeds violence and leads to a breakdown of law and order. It is a cycle that allows groups like Boko Haram to flourish and carry out those most heinous crimes.

Put simply, we need to break the cycle. By we, I mean all of us, including the Security Council, but responsibility must fall first and foremost to the Governments affected. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Government of Nigeria have a duty to restore stability because instability fuels crises. As they do so, they must respect human rights and international humanitarian law. They cannot be part of the problem if they want to be part of the solution.

That means that Governments must protect civilians as they restore stability. It means that they must act on allegations of human rights abuses, including sexual violence, irrespective of whether they are allegations against their own forces or any other group and that includes United Nations peacekeepers too. It means Governments holding to account those who have committed such crimes, showing that there can be no impunity or escape and that the rule of law applies to everyone.

We need to help them in that effort. That is why the United Kingdom, together with our United Nations and non-governmental organization partners, are supporting the Nigerian Government to re-establish basic social services to areas that they have stabilized. It is why we pledged \$6 million to support to humanitarian response in the Kasais, and why we support the Human Rights Council's unanimous decision to deploy a team of experts to look into the situation there. It is why we provide training to the Nigerian armed forces and to African peacekeeping contingents on protecting civilians and on preventing sexual and gender-based violence. And it is why the United Kingdom is funding

legal assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help the survivors of those crimes.

But ultimately, those are all comparatively short-term actions. To end the crises that afflict so many women and girls disproportionately in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria, we need to see long-term progress on the women and peace and security agenda. At its heart, that means women's equality in all aspects of politics, Government and society. It is unacceptable that women continue to be so poorly represented in formal governance and peace processes when, time after time, studies show that women's participation in such processes aids their ultimate success.

In Nigeria, for instance, women's participation in the House of Representatives and the Senate has fallen since 2011. It now stands at around 5 per cent. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, only two women were involved in discussions to reach a political agreement during the crisis last year. Had just one more woman been involved, they would have matched the total number of women sitting around this table representing the member States of the Security Council. Whether in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Nigeria or, indeed, in the Security Council, let us all advocate for the full active participation of women. Women have spent too long enduring and surviving these crises. It is long past time for them to play their fullest part in solving them.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Egyptian delegation for having convened today's briefing on the goals and outcome of the high-level joint African Union-United Nations solidarity mission to the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 19 to 27 July.

I commend the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed; Ambassador Tété António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Executive Director of UN-Women, whom we welcome. I thank the Deputy Secretary-General and Ambassador Tété António for the quality of their respective briefings, which were very comprehensive and rich.

The African Union and the United Nations had every reason to conduct a joint visit to these two large

African countries — which have quite rightly been qualified as giants of the continent, given their size, demography, economic weight, rich cultural diversity and extraordinary biodiversity — in order to promote truly sustainable and inclusive development. Indeed, looking at the situation of the countries visited, and many other cases, we are convinced that the women and peace and security approach is one very useful method out of several used to respond to crises and to build the resilience of the States and the communities in question when faced with a wide array of traditional challenges as well as new threats.

It should be recalled that resolution 1325 (2000) was inspired by Africa. As just mentioned by Ambassador António, the resolution was inspired by Namibia. That is why the configuration of the mission, which combined the extraordinary female leadership of the United Nations with that of the African Union, beyond the purely symbolic, seems to be a fine example of cooperation between the United Nations and the pan-African organization. That cooperation is very useful in order to address adequately the many challenges to peace, security and development in Africa. The Senegalese delegation would therefore like to warmly congratulate the initiators of the mission who, as our briefers explained, was rich in teachings.

We would like it to be just as rich in terms of its impact both on policymakers and on the targets of those policies, namely, the women in those countries and, in particular, those directly affected by the security and humanitarian crises. This is a model of concerted action that constitutes one further step in the implementation of resolution 2242 (2015), adopted by the Council in October 2015, 15 years after the aforementioned pioneering resolution 1325 (2000). The visit highlighted the crises in the countries visited in terms of the place and the role of women in the future of their societies and countries, especially in times of conflict.

My delegation would like to note with satisfaction, in view of the content of this high-level mission, the desire to align and create consistency on a practical level among the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063 and its Peace and Security Architecture.

Finally, a great deal of information was gathered on the ground, and positive interactions were enjoyed by the joint mission, both in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular with the highest

authorities of those countries, as well as with women victims of conflict and crises, such as the high school students of Chibok. We remain convinced that the information and the interactions will strengthen the work of the networks set up to better address the issue of women and peace and security at all levels.

Senegal echoes the appeal of the Deputy Secretary-General for the increased mobilization of the international community in favour of these two countries, the central African subregion, and Africa in general. Next month, the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union will hold in Addis Ababa their eleventh annual consultations. I see no better opportunity to follow up on the visit.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia thanks the Egyptian presidency for convening and organizing this meeting. We also welcome the presence among us of Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, Ambassador Teté António.

Bolivia should like to acknowledge in particular the Deputy Secretary-General, not only for the briefing, but also for realizing the initiative to carry out the first joint United Nations-African Union high-level visit focused on the importance of women's participation in the processes of peace, security and development, in addition to the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict. We believe that this trip can become a model and that visits of this nature can take place not only in Africa, but in other regions of the world. Both are necessary to raise societal awareness of the role that women should play in all areas — economic, political and social — with respect to international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Concerning sexual violence in conflict, Bolivia is of the view that this crime is one of the most inhuman acts, the emotional and physical consequences of which permanently affect the personal development of the survivors. The international community now needs to address this problem, pooling its efforts to implement measures at the national, regional and international levels. We believe that sexual violence in conflict represents a threat to international peace and security. That is why the Security Council decided to adopt the implementation of the agenda on women and peace and security.

In that connection, we highlight United Nations efforts to implement Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2242 (2015), and the relevant General Assembly resolutions in order to integrate the gender perspective effectively. However, and in spite of those efforts, women's participation remains marginal. The Security Council alone has adopted eight resolutions related to sexual violence against women and the strong correlation between peace processes and the participation of women therein. We must continue to work to ensure that the situation of women in conflict is treated as a matter of priority within the agenda of the Security Council. Seventeen years ago, resolution 1325 (2000), highlighted the crucial link between gender equality and international peace and security.

Sexual violence in conflict does not distinguish between genders; however, it does mostly affect women and girls, who are victims of rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced marriage, forced sterilization and other forms of violence. One example is the case of Nigeria, where since 2014, Boko Haram, a violent extremist group, has kidnapped approximately 7,000 women and girls who are victims of these crimes, leaving deep wounds in the female population of that country.

Terrorist groups also use sexual violence not only as a weapon of war, but also as a means of financing their activities. It is therefore necessary to fight attempts to legitimize illicit profits derived from sexual exploitation and forced prostitution that have entered the global financial system through money laundering and so-called tax havens, which tend to reduce or eliminate controls in place in various areas of investment. In this context, it is necessary to investigate whether these terrorist groups gain access to these so-called tax havens.

Similarly, we are concerned at the ongoing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the Kasai region, one of the most affected by violence, more than 500 boys and girls have been recruited into armed groups. There have been more than 600 cases of sexual violence since August 2016, and there are numerous cases of victims of human trafficking and smuggling, summary executions, arbitrary detentions and arrests. Furthermore, according to UNICEF data, in the Kasai region, violent clashes between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the

Kamuina Nsapu militia have had devastating effects on children.

In addition to the foregoing, one of the most difficult consequences of sexual violence that survivors have to overcome is the stigma they and their children face, together with the related discrimination and the socioeconomic marginalization that relegates them to second-class status. Accordingly, the international community should contribute to lending support to national initiatives aimed at reintegrating the survivors of these traumas and their children into society, so that they can fully enjoy their rights.

To this end, Bolivia supports the Secretary-General's four-pronged strategy to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and respond to existing cases, including giving priority to victims and listening to their needs and experiences; putting an end to the impunity that triggers stigmatization; promoting the participation of civil society and foreign partners; and improving strategic communication in order to raise awareness. In addition, measures needed to prevent armed conflicts and promote the participation of women in peace, security and development processes should be implemented.

We acknowledge that there remain structural challenges, such as the patriarchal mindset of appropriation and ownership of women's bodies, including control over their sexuality and even their reproductive capacity. Violence against women is the expression of the patriarchal system rooted in society, which is made even more radical when women and girls are used, among other things, as military shields.

Bolivia emphasizes the need to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and other regional organizations in the fight against sexual violence in conflict. Close communication between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission is vital if we are to implement the women and peace and security agenda on the African continent and thereby strengthen existing mechanisms.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the African Union's 2063 Agenda, hold gender equality and women's empowerment among their most important goals. Without women taking their full place as key actors, it will be impossible to make progress in terms of social development. Gender equality is not just

a human right, but it also provides a basis for achieving sustainable peace and development.

In our experience, the Bolivian experience, the sovereign administration of natural resources is paramount for the socioeconomic development of a State. Indeed, it is through it, together with proper leadership and political will, that a structural shift can be made in the key areas of development.

Since the promulgation of its new political State Constitution in 2009, Bolivia has drawn up and implemented legislation designed to build a fair society with equal opportunities for women, emphasizing their political empowerment by establishing parity and alternation in the lists of candidates for representative office, making ours the country with the second-highest number of female parliamentarians in the world. In the economic sphere, the law on the community renewal of agrarian reform ensures the right of women to own land.

In conclusion, Bolivia proposes drawing up, in addition to the Secretary-General's four-point plan, a pact that guarantees the empowerment and inclusion of women in the light of Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda, which calls for the Security Council and other United Nations entities in the United Nations system to address this issue. This pact should ensure, first, the political empowerment of women through laws that guarantee parity and alternation in elected representation posts. Secondly, it should ensure and promote women's participation in peace processes by carving out an active role for them in prevention, mediation and dialogue in order to find solutions on an equal footing. Thirdly, in this pact, we should ensure that women are engaged in post-conflict reconstruction through their economic, social and cultural reintegration. Fourthly, the economic empowerment of women should be ensured through laws and public policies that allow, *inter alia*, for access to land ownership and credit to facilitate their attainment of economic independence. Of course, all peace and development processes must include women if we truly want a fair, stable and lasting peace.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I wish to thank Ambassador Tété António and, in particular, Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed, for their briefings on the tremendous challenges that women continue to face in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Lake Chad Basin. We applaud this inaugural joint effort Deputy Secretary-General has launched

with the African Union to draw needed attention and renewed international impetus to advancing women's roles in peace and security and development processes worldwide. The Security Council needs to do a better job understanding the threats that women face in conflict zones as well as acknowledging that we can better help countries recover from conflict by promoting the full inclusion of women in peace processes.

The use of sexual violence in conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a long history, and the recent violence in the Kasai regions is the latest horrific chapter. The United Nations has received more than 600 reports of sexual violence in the Kasais since August, including 186 reports of conflict-related sexual violence by certain units of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have heard reports of atrocities against civilians including executions of children. Civilians are being mutilated, burned alive and hacked to death, and the violence is still getting worse. The violence and ongoing and egregious abuses have forced more than 1.3 million people to flee their homes in search of safety.

It is important that the Deputy Secretary-General has raised these issues with us today. Far too many victims are suffering with too little attention paid to their plight. The Security Council needs to act now to stop this violence, including by demanding that Government forces cease violations and hold accountable those who commit sexual violence and other atrocities.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram has ravaged the north-eastern regions of the country, kidnapping scores of women and children, subjecting them to slavery and brainwashing these victims to carry out still more attacks. In March of this year, I had the opportunity with other Council members to visit the Lake Chad Basin and to meet with the displaced in Maiduguri in north-eastern Nigeria. The women there spoke movingly of what they had endured at the hands of Boko Haram. There were accounts of kidnappings and forced marriage and of gender-based and sexual exploitation perpetrated by Boko Haram and other armed groups. And the victims, including women and girls, continue to suffer enormously from stigmatization and a lack of psychosocial support. These abuses are sickening; they should shock us.

Seven years of violence in north-eastern Nigeria have taken the lives of more than 15,000, forced more than 2 million from their homes, and left more than

4.7 million dependent on food aid and at risk of famine in many areas. As the Deputy Security-General has reported, women and girls who have been liberated from the traumas they faced under Boko Haram sometimes return home to their villages only to face new trauma. This new reality comes in the form of exclusion and stigmatization from communities that they once called home. After capture by Boko Haram, many of these women and girls cannot go home — even once they have been freed. These women and girls, and, in many cases, the children born while they were in Boko Haram's custody, face homelessness and despair, and these challenges may well linger for generations. The United States will continue its work with the Government of Nigeria to root out Boko Haram and support stabilization in the north-east.

The threat posed by Boko Haram and affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in West Africa remains grave, but, as we work to make progress in the conflict, it also remains essential that Nigeria continue to work to win the peace. That will require strengthening Government institutions, in particular local Governments and regions impacted by the conflict, supporting economic investment and development and providing services to citizens in establishing effective and regionally coordinated disarmament, demobilization, deradicalization and reintegration programmes.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Lake Chad basin are unfortunately just two examples of a much broader pattern characteristic of the conflicts on the Security Council's agenda. In an increasing number of places, when War or conflict breaks out, women are among the first to become victims of unconscionable abuse. Fighters often seek degrading the dignity of women and girls as a central element of their strategy for repressing the populations that they target. We hope that the trip and briefing today by the Deputy Secretary-General will help increase awareness of that dire and widespread problem.

The United States will remain strongly supportive of policies that aim to protect women who are the victims of conflict and that promote the role of women as peacemakers when violence ends. One suspects that many of the intractable conflicts on the Council's agenda would perhaps be a little less intractable if more women were at the table. The United States will work to recognize the unique contributions that women make and to draw attention to their plight when they

are the victims of conflict. Moreover, the United States remains committed to implementing the United States national action plan on women, peace and security — a plan born out of resolution 1325 (2000).

We hope that today's meeting will help push the members of the Council to take action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lake Chad basin and in other conflicts in which women and girls are at grave risk. The Deputy Secretary-General has brought those issues to our and the world's attention today. Our responsibility now as members of the Security Council is to follow up this briefing with consequences for those who perpetrate the abuses. The United States will continue to lead the way in pressing for this much needed accountability.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Permanent Observer of the African Union, Mr. Tété António, for their useful and detailed briefings. We would also like to commend the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten.

Preventing and resolving conflicts is a necessary precondition for ensuring stability and sustainable development and for promoting and protecting human rights. We support the work of the African Union and subregional bodies in their roles regarding conflict prevention and resolution, since it is precisely those organizations that have the best information concerning the situation on the ground and the possibilities for peaceful settlement. We also favour strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

The issue of women and peace and security is an integral part of the overall peace process and post-conflict peacebuilding. The African Union five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme 2015-2020 is a clear example of a regional initiative to bolster women's participation in peace processes. It is also important to ensure that such work is not merely declamatory but leads to specific results in connection with improving women and girls' status in conflict and post-conflict societies.

We are concerned about ongoing reports of sexual violence perpetrated by terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and Boko Haram.

We categorically condemn that criminal practice used by terrorists. We urge States to cooperate actively in combating the shadow economy of terrorists who benefit financially from human trafficking, sexual slavery and forced prostitution. We support the work of the multinational armed forces comprised of African troops to combat Boko Haram.

We concur with our colleagues' concerns that the deteriorating situation in the Congolese provinces of Kasai is harming women and children. We are concerned about the escalating confrontation between the authorities and tribal armed militias in those provinces. The Government and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo need to take additional measures to diffuse the situation. We would, however, like to warn against indiscriminately blaming what is happening on the Congolese troops and police for their allegedly disproportionate use of force. Members of the Kamwina Nsapu militia are also to blame. They are attacking Government officials, schools and polling stations and recruiting child soldiers. That cannot justify human rights violations by law enforcement agencies. We nonetheless need to wait for the outcome of the official investigation by the authorities.

We believe that the root causes of that problem should be addressed by assisting the Congolese authorities to reform their security sector so as to ensure that law enforcement agents uphold human rights. The implementation of the human rights due diligence policy needs to be carried out more cautiously, as it does not allow for the building of the capacity of law enforcement agencies, but as a consequence the military and political situation is failing to improve and there seems to be a vicious cycle. We believe that in order to improve stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the comprehensive political agreement of 31 December 2016 needs to be upheld by all Congolese parties.

The protection of women in armed conflict from the threat of sexual violence is the primary task of the Governments of States involved in conflicts. We would therefore like to particularly highlight the measures taken by the Government of Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to combat gender and sexual violence in armed conflict, including combating impunity for that type of crime, deploying female police officers in camps for internally displaced persons and refugee camps, providing medical, psychological and

legal assistance to the survivors of such violence and helping them in social and economic reintegration. We believe that the international community, including the United Nations, faces a significant challenge in helping build national capacity related to combating and preventing violence against women and girls in armed conflict and in assisting national efforts to improve women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): At the outset, I would like to thank the Egyptian presidency for convening this meeting. It is my special pleasure to welcome Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed. I thank her for her comprehensive briefing and the Permanent Observer of the African Union, Ambassador Tête António, for his very useful contribution.

Italy commends the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General in having organized the first-ever joint high-level mission with the African Union focused on women's meaningful participation in peace, security and development. We welcome it for three main reasons.

First, the mission has paved the way for a more sustained partnership with the African Union in that area, which we applaud and fully encourage.

Secondly, the initiative aims at tackling a problem for which the United Nations system has always been criticized, namely its work in silos, which has prevented at times an efficient response to crises. In keeping with resolution 2242 (2015), it is vital that we ensure better mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the development, prioritization, coordination and implementation of policies and programmes.

Thirdly, it is important that the United Nations continue in its advocacy and engagement in the field so as to support national authority in ending all current violations and holding all perpetrators accountable.

In this regard, we do not consider it a coincidence that the notorious rebel commander and warlord Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, who was implicated in the brutal mass rape of at least 387 civilians in Walikale in 2010, decided to surrender to MONUSCO on 26 July while the Mission was in place.

As its visit has demonstrated, advancing gender equality and promoting women's active involvement in the peace process are essential for achieving sustainable development as well as lasting peace and security. As exemplified by the many women whom the Deputy

Secretary-General met during her mission, women are a driving force in development, even in the most challenging situations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, displaced women, despite their dramatic living conditions in refugee camps, have succeeded in organizing some form of access to microcredit, enabling them not only to survive but even to contribute to their communities.

In the meeting with Government officials, the women and peace and security discourse, namely, the revitalization of women's participation and leadership in the peace and security process, was meant to be an entry point for an initial dialogue with the local authorities in both Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Italy welcomes the choice made by the Deputy Secretary-General to visit Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Nigeria, Boko Haram continues to be a major threat to peace and security, also because of several cases of abduction targeting women, such as the one involving the Chibok girls perpetrated by that terrorist group. During the Security Council mission to the Lake Chad basin in March, of which I had the privilege of being part, we observed the strong engagement of local government in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups and the attention devoted to promoting the participation of civil society in the fight against radicalization.

It was stressed by the main interlocutors that a crucial role was played in this regard by women's organizations in particular. It is critical for us to keep supporting such efforts.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where I had the privilege of serving my embassy for more than three years, we witnessed one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with a total of 3.8 million internally displaced persons. We believe that it is important to pay close attention to the situation. In this context, women and children suffer most of the consequences, both in the eastern provinces and the Grand Kasai region. In the Grand Kasai region in particular, we hope that the Government will conduct a prompt, transparent and independent investigation to establish the facts and the circumstances of the human rights violations and abuses perpetrated over the past months.

In this regard, while recalling that the Congolese authorities have the primary responsibility to protect their people, we hope that the United Nations Joint

Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will continue to be provided with the resources necessary to assist the Local government in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Allow me to reiterate our deep concern at the current political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is one of the causes of the current wave of violence. The swift implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement is urgent, together with the full implementation of the confidence-building measures agreed in that same agreement. Critical steps must be taken in order to organize elections as soon as possible, with the full and equal participation of women.

To conclude, I would like to once again assure the Deputy Secretary-General and the Council that we will continue to promote and support women's participation and leadership in peace, security and development in Africa and help the continent achieve its Agenda 2063.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I should like to start by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General for the informative briefing on the first joint African Union-United Nations high-level visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria, in the context of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), on women and peace and security.

We express our appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her efforts and commitment and are gratified to see the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on the women and peace and security agenda. We also thank Ambassador Tête António for his remarks.

The use of sexual violence as a tactic by Boko Haram terrorists in northern Nigeria has indeed been a matter of serious concern affecting the lives of women and children in a tragic and painful manner. The same victims are also the most affected segments of society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Internally displaced persons, particularly women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria, including those in the camps, continue to face specific protection risks as a result of the situation of vulnerability in which they find themselves and the lack of sustainable solutions to respond thereto.

It is critical that the root causes of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo be addressed and that the threats posed by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria be effectively handled so as to reduce and eliminate the

vulnerabilities of women and girls in conflict-affected areas and prevent further displacement. This would require giving greater attention to the integration of women in the peace and security agenda, particularly in addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls in their protection challenges. Herein lies the value of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent relevant Council resolutions on women and peace and security.

We recognize the importance of further strengthening the emergency preparedness and response so as to provide effective protection and achieve sustainable solutions for those internally displaced as a result of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria, particularly women and children. It is in this context that we would like to stress the need to strengthen the collaboration between humanitarian and development actors to find sustainable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria, particularly in supporting the provision of basic services, livelihoods and the deployment of opportunities for IDPs as well as the necessary infrastructure, including within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063.

This would contribute to reducing and eliminating the vulnerabilities of internally displaced women and girls, and reduce their dependence on humanitarian assistance. That is why we appreciate the attention given by the Deputy Secretary-General to the need to link humanitarian and development responses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Nigeria. We encourage her to persist in this noble endeavour.

Finally, I would like to conclude by affirming the strong commitment of Ethiopia to working with all relevant actors in advancing the women and peace and security agenda and in ensuring the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and relevant subsequent resolutions aimed at enhancing the participation and engagement of women, women leaders and groups in prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding activities.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): My delegation appreciates the briefing by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed as well as the briefing by the Permanent Observer of the African Union. We also look forward to the input by the representative of Nigeria.

We welcome both the conduct of thematic regional visits and the initiative of informing the Council on their outcomes. Such visits and the subsequent briefings provide us with additional insights and a better understanding of situations on the ground, thus better equipping the Council to properly evaluate the problems and challenges in respective countries.

It is praiseworthy that the visit was conducted to raise the profile of gender-related issues in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The role of women in bringing about positive change after conflict can hardly be overestimated. Women are a driving force behind peacebuilding efforts in their communities. The direction of social and economic development depends on the active participation of women in public life and entrepreneurial activities at both the local and national levels.

The ultimate success or failure of peace agreements and the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts can quite often be linked to the level of engagement of women in these processes. Having a seat at the negotiating table, shaping an agenda to ensure the inclusion of gender-related issues and playing a role in the implementation of negotiated arrangements — all this is a *sine qua non* if sustainable peace is to be built in conflict-affected areas. It is therefore highly commendable that in its meetings with high-level officials from Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the joint delegation of the United Nations and the African Union stressed the importance of women's participation in peace and security processes, as well as in elections and other political activities. Concrete and tangible follow-up is needed in order to promote women's rights.

In many places in Africa, conflicts and crises are accompanied by a devastating surge in violence directed at women and girls. The persistent use of sexual violence as a weapon of war in African conflicts has left lasting scars on communities and societies. In that regard, one of the stated objectives of the visit — to make the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls more visible — is extremely timely. The meetings and conversations with the Chibok girls in Nigeria and displaced residents in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must have been very difficult, given the suffering that many of them have endured.

Discussing sexual violence, sexual slavery, forced marriage and physical and psychological abuse can be

devastating. But such conversations are essential if we want to understand how we can support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. There can be no hiding from the fact that these survivors are revictimized through public shaming and stigmatization way too often. Much more must be done if they are to achieve proper socioeconomic reintegration. Another equally important aspect is ensuring accountability for committing crimes of sexual violence, not only to meet demands for justice, but to help societies break cycles of conflict. The perpetrators of sexual violence must be brought to account without regard for their affiliation and rank.

The pervasive nature of this horrible scourge makes it imperative for us, the international community, to double down on our efforts to end it. Designing prevention policies, ensuring accountability for the perpetrators and providing adequate support and rehabilitation for their victims should be part and parcel of any conflict resolution endeavour.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Ms. Amina Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary-General, for her thorough briefing on the joint visit of the United Nations and the African Union to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria a few weeks ago. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tête António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations. It goes without saying that the African Union is a fundamental partnership of the United Nations where peace and security are concerned.

I would like to begin by expressing Uruguay's full support for the initiative to make the joint visit, emphasizing the participation of senior United Nations officials, including the Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. In our view, this kind of initiative is extremely useful for giving us a deeper understanding of the situation of women in armed conflict and helps to turn a spotlight on this vulnerable group, which nonetheless has a key role to play in the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

We also believe that it can be a good complement to the efforts of the Security Council's Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security, which my delegation, jointly with the delegation of Sweden, has the honour to chair. As members know, the Group was established in accordance with resolution 2242

(2015), which the Council adopted in October 2015. In the 18 months of its existence it has held 12 meetings to discuss the situation of women in Mali, Iraq, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Yemen and the Lake Chad basin. The information and analysis it has produced has also been used by various stakeholders in the effort to advance the agenda on women and peace and security, from donors and policymakers to defenders and agents for women's rights on the ground.

I would like to comment briefly on the particular cases of Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the countries that were the object of the visit. We are very concerned about the systematic use in Nigeria of sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism, such as in the terrorist group Boko Haram's abduction and sexual exploitation of thousands of women and girls and the increasing use of women as suicide bombers. However, there is a dearth of information on the impact of gender on such complex humanitarian crises, as well as on the role that women's participation and leadership and gender-equality issues have to play in peacebuilding efforts, for example in the fight against violent extremism, the restoration of State authority and the protection of human rights.

In that regard, my delegation has identified several key areas requiring special attention, such as transborder judicial cooperation; assistance in dealing with the stigmatization of victims and their children; the provision of basic services in areas such as education and sexual and reproductive health, as essential components of the humanitarian response; and ensuring that national and regional strategies identify survivors of sexual violence as victims of terrorism so that they can receive appropriate aid.

During the Security Council's visit in March to the countries of the Lake Chad basin, we had the opportunity to hear valuable testimony by Nigerian women, from members of Parliament to activists and the internally displaced, in our meetings in Abuja and Maiduguri. All of them shared their expectations, aspirations and frustrations, their initiatives and plans. Above all, we were struck by the clarity of their message, which was their simple desire to have the opportunity to freely exercise their rights and make decisive contributions to their country's social and political development.

With regard to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uruguay supports every effort to guarantee women's participation in supporting the

country's political process and organizing and holding elections. It should be emphasized that the Security Council has tasked the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with supporting the Government and the United Nations country team in ensuring women's representation and participation in political processes. We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this area, particularly by strengthening the Ministry of Women and appointing a special adviser to the President on these issues. We urge it to continue its efforts to ensure women's full and equal participation, especially in the approaching elections.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): At the outset, I would like to join other members of the Council in thanking Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Ambassador Tête António for their valuable briefings and contribution.

The joint mission of the United Nations and the African Union is an important effort to close the gap between the perceptions and the reality of the agenda on women and peace and security that exists between New York and Africa. It is also very significant as the very first joint trip based on the enhanced partnership between the African Union Commission and the United Nations in the area of peace and security. I would therefore like to commend Ms. Mohammed's strong and insightful leadership, which made the visit a great success, and we hope that other, similar, missions will follow. This one made it clear that gender inequality and discrimination against women are among the root causes of conflict in both Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, during the visit to the Lake Chad Basin region in March, members of the Security Council witnessed the important role of women in ensuring peace and security in the region.

The existing conflicts will become further protracted and peace will become more distant and fragile if countries in the region and the international community fail to protect women, who are often the first victims of conflict, and do not ensure their participation in any peacebuilding efforts — as women are bearers of peace.

When it comes to the protection of women, we have to address sexual violence first. Holding perpetrators legally accountable and providing victims with judicial redress are both key elements that require both a legal

structure and its consistent implementation. Japan is proud to be a leading supporter of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and specifically the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, in their effort to provide assistance to Governments in Africa, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to ensure the rule of law.

Regarding women's participation, we must enable women to serve as leaders and to aspire to a better future. Women's involvement makes their communities and regions more resilient. It will prevent the infiltration of violent extremist groups and end the negative spiral of poverty and conflict. Japan continues to collaborate with UN-Women to promote women's participation through empowerment, community dialogue and education, focusing on the Sahel region.

In Nigeria, it is encouraging that a group of Chibok girls were released. However, as today's briefing clarified, we must not forget that so many other girls are still held captive and used as weapons of war by terrorist groups. Even after their release, many are still stigmatized and struggle to adapt to the return to their communities. In such cases, we see the need to find comprehensive and long-term approaches to support women in conflict settings.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are gratified that perpetrators of rape are being held accountable. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is at an important crossroads in the maintenance and enhancement of peace and stability throughout the elections. The success of the elections hinges on women being actively involved in the decision-making process for their own future. The bitter experiences of both countries should serve as prominent lessons for other conflict-affected nations in Africa and beyond.

In conclusion, let me add that Japan underscores peacebuilding in Africa, including through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). This month, Japan will organize the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in Mozambique. This fall, Japan will host the Fourth World Assembly for Women in Tokyo. Japan has emphasized the fundamental nexus between peace and women through these international forums, which I believe embody the same values and message as the joint AU-United Nations Mission.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Amina Mohammed,

and the Permanent Observer of the African Union, Ambassador Tête António, for their valuable briefings this morning and for the leadership that they have shown in women, peace and security. They illustrate how the African Union (AU)-United Nations partnership is growing even stronger, which we very much welcome.

Sweden applauds the initiative for the joint visit. Today we put the women, peace and security agenda front and centre, thus enabling us to properly understand and respond to contemporary security challenges in Nigeria and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With resolution 2242 (2015), the Council should be shifting women and gender equality from a peripheral to a core issue in the Security Council. It is also at the heart of Sweden's feminist foreign policy. Combatting root causes is only possible with truly inclusive solutions. It is also why we remain a steadfast supporter of UN-Women here today — to ensure that women will be a part of the solution in humanitarian assistance, development and in peace and security.

Going forward, we would also highlight three priorities. First of all, no sustainable peace can be achieved without effectively linking humanitarian, security, human rights and development efforts. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sustaining Peace Agenda provides an integrated approach and the master plan for the United Nations in that regard. There can be no humanitarian solution for a political crisis or for long-term development challenges, which was quite evident during our visit to Lake Chad in March where we witnessed first hand how the roots of the conflict run much deeper than the Boko Haram insurgency and how humanitarian assistance and military efforts must be supplemented by development assistance and investments.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sweden supports the Humanitarian Fund from both its humanitarian programme and its development programme to enable humanitarian actors to commit to longer-term engagement and planning. In all that we do, SDG 5 should guide our efforts to make sure that the needs of women and girls are heard and addressed.

Secondly, nothing should be discussed about women without women. Exclusion will always result in inequality and the risk of continued conflict. Women's effective participation and full enjoyment of their human rights is crucial to achieving effective and sustainable peace.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, democratic and peaceful development requires the full implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement, including women's full participation in the upcoming elections. We are encouraged by local efforts to increase the registration of female voters by, for example, keeping voter registration facilities open on Sundays. It is clear that there is no shortage of women wanting to get involved in Congolese politics, as the umbrella network *Rien sans les femmes* and other Congolese organizations have vividly demonstrated.

In Nigeria, encouraging local efforts to bring more women into decision-making positions are also under way, which is most welcome since women currently hold less than 6 per cent of the seats in the Parliament and in the courts. Efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Nigeria to enhance women's participation must be strongly supported by the international community.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen our efforts to combat sexual and gender-based crimes. Violence against women and girls violates their human rights and hinders development. In Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence risk stigma of association with insurgents, creating further alienation and isolation which, in turn, risks leading to further socioeconomic frustration and the continuation of the conflict.

It is, of course, the primary responsibility of States to ensure their citizen's safety and dignity and, when violated, accountability, but if States are unwilling or unable to do so, the international tribunals have an important complementary role to play. The Security Council should also increase its attention to sexual and gender-based violence transgressions in the implementation of its mandates. We would also like to see enhanced attention to sexual and gender-based violence in both thematic and country-specific action when it comes to sanctions. We note that sexual and gender-based violence rarely receives the appropriate attention in United Nations reports.

In conclusion, today's briefing has shown that the women, peace and security agenda needs to be properly addressed when the Security Council debates geographic security challenges. It is now important to ensure the effective follow-up of that important initiative. We look forward to continued discussions in the Council and in the Informal Expert Group on

Women, Peace and Security. We need the whole United Nations system to more coherently report and act in line with resolution 2242 (2015) as a part of the follow-up.

That initiative should serve as an inspiration for continued efforts in the field and we encourage similar trips to more countries and regions by United Nations senior leadership, United Nations Women and other relevant actors. Intensified cooperation between the AU and the United Nations related to women, peace and security benefits both organizations because it benefits the strive for peace and prosperity for all, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria. In such efforts, Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed, Ambassador Tété António and all colleagues of the Council can count on the full support of Sweden.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): I would like to first thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her comprehensive briefing on her visit to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I commend her for her inspirational leadership. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tété António for his briefing.

Following the 19 April signing of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security by Secretary-General Guterres and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the second joint United Nations-African Union high-level trip has been significant in focusing on the meaningful participation of women in peace reconciliation, security and development. Such collaborative efforts must not only continue but also be intensified in order to bring the two organizations closer to reaching the targets of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

We have to help the region overcome the challenges of eradicating poverty and achieving inclusive and sustainable growth. We must support Africa's steady pursuit of stability and transformative, sustainable development. In that context, the predominant emphasis must be placed on the involvement of woman and youth, as well as their right to human dignity without any form of degradation. Therefore, we encourage strengthening the growing cooperation between the African Union Peace and Security Council, the African Union Commission and the Security Council on gender and youth issues.

The African peace and security architecture and the Silence the Guns by 2020 initiative will bring a new focus on preventive diplomacy, which cannot succeed without the support of the international community. Therefore, in all negotiations, women and youth, who constitute the majority of the population, must inherit and shape a continent that is free from conflict in all forms, especially violence against women.

We will reach our goals only if we pursue a significant dialogue between the United Nations and the African Union on implementing resolution 2242 (2015). We must also integrate the women and peace and security agenda across all of the Council's activities, including United Nations system programmes, the mandate of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on issues related to sexual abuse, as well as work related to women and children in armed conflict and international organizations. Therefore, Kazakhstan will stand by all peace initiatives in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere, which have to incorporate bottom-up and top-down strategies that will bring about transformation.

The situation related to women's rights in the countries that the Deputy Secretary-General visited is extremely fragile and alarming. The situations in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been aggravated by ongoing military actions of armed groups, particularly Boko Haram. Therefore, every effort must be made to ensure the protection of the human rights of women, keeping in mind that the African Union pays special attention to that issue through the recently established Pan African Women's Association, which has been classified as a specialized agency of the African Union.

We must also pay full attention to the dire humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which greatly impacts women and girls, who represent the largest number of internally displaced persons and refugees. More than 11 million people have been affected by the humanitarian crisis and more than two-thirds of those 11 million are women and girls. We believe that United Nations agencies, regional organizations and international donors must elaborate a single, comprehensive strategy for the region in order to increase the volume of humanitarian aid and ensure that that aid reaches those in need. We express special appreciation and call for support to be provided to the Government and the people of Uganda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and other

countries that have kept their doors open for refugees fleeing from conflict.

It is especially important to further support the African Union's efforts to increase the role of women in strengthening the human rights, security and development nexus, which is essential for stabilizing the overall situation in those countries. We are convinced that long-term stability and sustainable peace can only be achieved by investing in the strong connection between peace, security and development. Therefore, we should address the root causes of the crisis in the region and create better opportunities for education and employment for the next generation. Kazakhstan will always stand for the engagement and contribution of women and youth in all phases of mediation, conflict resolution, post-conflict recovery and long-term development in the joint efforts of the United Nations and the African Union.

We commend the launch of the African Women Leaders Network's, which was initiated on 2 June by the African Union Commission, UN-Women and Germany. The Network seeks to enhance the leadership of women in the transformation of Africa. It focuses on governance, peace and stability.

To conclude, we emphasize the crucial need for development programmes in the aforementioned countries visited by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and throughout the whole African continent. The close link between security and development is very important, particularly in the region but also in the world as a whole. That is because the nexus of security and development is actively working on addressing many ongoing issues. We need to support interdependence across the pillars of the United Nations.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed and Ambassador António for their briefings.

China welcomes the joint United Nations-African Union visit to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The visit has a positive significance for the international community in helping it to understand the situation on the ground related to the protection of women and children in relevant countries and regions. It will assist the international community and the United Nations in providing further assistance to relevant countries. China commends the visit.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and north-eastern Nigeria are faced with varying challenges related to armed conflict and terrorism. Their security situations are complex and grave. Women and children in the region are under the severe threat of sexual violence. The international community should pay greater attention to that issue and comprehensively enhance the protection of vulnerable groups of women and children. I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, effective measures need to be adopted in order to stabilize the situation and improve security at an early date. The international community should stick to the general direction of settling hotspot issues by political means, and pushing relevant parties to settle their disputes peacefully through dialogue and negotiation. Efforts to combat terrorism and cross-border organized crime should be enhanced in order to cut off the channels for the movement of terrorists, provide necessary protection and humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups, such as women, and create a secure and stable environment.

Secondly, integrated measures should be used to enhance the capacity-building of the countries in question, which bear the primary responsibility for preventing and combating sexual violence in conflict and for protecting women and children in the country. The international community should respect the sovereignty and will of the countries in question, respect the measures adopted by the Governments in question in the light of their own situations, provide targeted and constructive assistance so as to promote their recovery and development, and enhance their capacity-building in the sectors of security, social services and governance.

Thirdly, synergy arising from cooperation between United Nations agencies and regional organizations should be ensured. The Security Council should fully play its role as the organ bearing primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security; strengthen coordination with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and UN-Women; and continue to strengthen cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union, in order to coordinate its work related to women, peace and security.

China would like to work with the international community to create a peaceful, secure and stable international environment and make a greater contribution to the swift eradication of sexual violence in conflict and continued advancement in the global cause to empower women.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing and initiative to lead the joint United Nations-African Union solidarity mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria and for being personally involved in combating violence against women. It is a daily struggle that calls for commitment and initiative, and France will support all ongoing efforts in that area.

I would also like to commend the efforts and commitment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and of the Executive Director of UN-Women, and reiterate our full support.

I also commend the enhanced cooperation between the Security Council and the African Union's Peace and Security Council, which is the focus of today's meeting. In that regard, I would like to thank Ambassador Tête António for his briefing.

Today's meeting is in keeping with the Secretary-General's cross-cutting and comprehensive approach, which we support as it seeks to avoid the silo mentality. We have stated on several occasions that, if we want the United Nations to fulfil the mandate that its Member States and peoples have conferred upon it, we must not address issues relating to peace and security, development and human rights separately. In that regard, we reiterate our support for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, the goals and targets aimed at empowering women and achieving gender equality.

Today's discussions attest in particular to the need for the Council to take at least three issues into more regular and systematic consideration: upholding women's rights, combating violence against women and, above all, encouraging their full participation in the process to achieve sustainable peace. The consensus today is that when we neglect half of humankind, we are sure to see ongoing conflict. That principle must be understood but it is also an urgent call for greater effectiveness. Through detailed accounts by Deputy Secretary-General's and the various missions

undertaken by the Security Council, we are well aware that the plight of many women is closely linked to our attempts to address threats to peace and security.

The next open debate on women and peace and security, which will be held in October, should enable us to offer and adopt concrete and operational solutions in that area and to again examine the specific ways to fully implement the eight resolutions on this agenda that have been adopted by the Council. More must be done to ensure that the rhetoric and commitments so often repeated are translated into action and bring about veritable change so that women are no longer victims, but rather actors in their own right in their respective societies. With regard to sexual abuse and sexual violence, France reiterates its full support for the Secretary-General's strategy and the zero-tolerance policy towards those responsible for perpetrating such abuses.

I shall now turn my attention to the two countries the Deputy Secretary-General visited.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must capture the Council's full attention. All efforts must be made to ensure that elections are held and that the crucial measures to ease the political tension outlined in the agreement reached on 31 December 2016 are implemented. Women must be fully involved in that process. France is particularly concerned by the violence in the Kasais, which has reached an unsustainable level. The crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will not be resolved unless justice is served for all those who were victims of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law and, in particular, women and girls.

We call on the Congolese authorities to cooperate fully with the team of international experts set up by the Human Rights Council in June. Those experts must have unhindered access to the places and people concerned in order to find those responsible for the violence. This is a crucial step so that those responsible for the violence can be brought to justice. We also reiterate our call for the Secretary-General to establish a special board of inquiry to shed light on the death of two experts who were working with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, we are also concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which affects women in particular, as

Ms. Amina Mohammed just underscored. Long-term solutions must be developed and implemented to address the situation of displaced women.

Given the extent of the crimes committed by Boko Haram against civilians in the Lake Chad basin region, which the Council visited last year and was the subject of discussion surrounding the issue of violence against women, the Council recalled that it was crucial for the security response to the terrorist group to be tethered to a judicial response, and that it be coordinated with neighbouring countries. Combating impunity must also be a priority, along with respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Deputy Secretary-General can count on France's full support for her efforts. I would like to take this opportunity as she is here with us today to inquire about future missions to address the plight of women and the issue of sexual violence.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Egypt.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her very comprehensive briefing on her recent visit to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would also like to thank the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, Mr. Tété António, for his briefing.

I also take this opportunity to laud the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence. This is an example of a partnership between the United Nations and a regional organization that should be used as a model to address sexual violence in conflict.

I should now like to highlight the following points.

First, Egypt welcomes the measures taken by the United Nations to address sexual violence in armed conflict, including the increase in the number of women protection advisers on the ground, support to strengthen national institution capacity and the launch of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence. Egypt also commends the efforts undertaken by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and in particular the support it gave to strengthen the capacity of States during armed conflict and post-conflict, in areas such as conducting inquiries and investigations, judicial prosecutions and

criminal trials, dispensing military justice, legislative reforms, the protection of witnesses and reparations.

Secondly, Egypt underscores its unwavering commitment to the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, championed by the Secretary-General. Egypt is committed to working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, within the framework of the General Assembly, to end to all forms of violence against women. Incidences of such violence committed within peacekeeping operations must be investigated, in line with General Assembly resolution 71/297. We reiterate that it is important for Blue Helmets to be properly trained to handle incidences of sexual violence.

Egypt commends the efforts undertaken by Nigeria to put an end to the sexual violence committed by the terrorist group Boko Haram, in north-eastern Nigeria. Those efforts include rehabilitation and support programmes for victims, programmes for the reintegration of women and girls into their local communities, and for the provision of legal, judicial and medical services to women who are victims of sexual violence.

In that regard, the fight against sexual violence requires synergy and strengthened cooperation between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries. Moreover, the international community, for its part, must continue to lend assistance to Nigeria so that the country can address the challenges linked to cases of sexual violence. In that regard, I would like to underscore that international efforts must be aligned in order to strengthen the capacity of community and religious leaders to raise the awareness of local communities about the importance of putting an end to stereotypes and the stigmatization that affect victims of sexual violence and their children. That stigmatization should be borne by the perpetrators of these crimes and not the victims. We must also prevent terrorism and extremism and win the intellectual war, including the fight against attempts by extremists to make rape permissible in religious terms. In that regard, we would like to welcome the role of Al-Azhar in the fight against erroneous fatwas issued by terrorist organizations pertaining to the situation of women in conflict.

Egypt welcomes the progress that has been made by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to put an end to sexual violence in conflict. We acknowledge the measures taken in that vein, including

the establishment of the post of a special adviser to the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on tackling sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers. We also welcome the efforts to implement the relevant national strategy, including the appointment of women judges and their deployment in the various regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There have been a variety of measures aimed at ensuring that victims have access to justice and also that they receive adequate and appropriate care.

On another note, recent violence has worsened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular in Kasai and other regions. There have been many victims of this worsening violence, including the two United Nations experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who lost their lives. As a result, the civilian population is faced with growing challenges, including the risk of sexual violence in conflict. This is a risk mostly faced by women and girls. In that respect, I highlight the reports on rapes perpetrated by militia against boys and girls in Kavumu in southern Kivu. Such reports underscore the importance of ramping up our efforts to ensure the implementation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo national strategy to combat sexual violence, with the support of the United Nations, and with a key role to be played by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on all partners to make their contribution to heed the humanitarian appeal of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to make available the necessary resources to United Nations agencies and to civil society as they seek to provide humanitarian aid, including to victims of sexual violence.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Itegboje (Nigeria): I thank the delegation of Egypt for organizing this briefing. I also commend the Deputy Secretary-General for taking her important trip to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and for her detailed briefing. We are pleased to note that the Deputy Secretary-General seized the opportunity of the visit to highlight the importance of women's role in achieving peace and development, and even the Sustainable Development Goals.

We also thank Ambassador Tété António of the Observer Mission of the African Union for his briefing.

It is evident that women and children suffer more, are extremely vulnerable to violent extremism and are victims of terrorism in many parts of the world most affected by the scourge. We condemn in the strongest terms the abduction, trafficking and maltreatment of women and girls by extremist groups, including the heinous activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, particularly in north-eastern Nigeria. Indeed, we condemn the use of women and girls as sex slaves. In this regard, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations aimed at improving interagency coordination, knowledge-building, advocacy and technical country-level support.

My delegation believes that to achieve an enduring result in the search for workable solutions to the challenges of sexual violence in conflict, priority must be accorded to addressing the enabling environment and underlying root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, hunger, human rights abuses, injustice, unemployment, corruption, lack of inclusiveness and impunity.

Perpetrators of sexual violence must be held accountable, but the capacity of the State to do so given the prevalence of weak structures and institutions needs to be addressed. Beyond the law-enforcement approach, however, dealing with the political economy of conflicts in a more holistic manner is crucial to finding potential remedies to the situation of conflicts around the world. In this regard, multilateral cooperation should be enhanced to strengthen States' capabilities in order to deal with the threats posed by violent conflicts, criminality and terrorism.

This briefing bears great relevance to the terrorist activities of Boko Haram in the north-east region of Nigeria, which have led to a huge displacement of about 2 million people and conflict-related violence against women and girls that has been widely condemned. Nigeria has always acted concertedly to ensure accountability for sexual violence crimes. We have also collaborated with the United Nations and other international partners to improve service delivery and enhance protection measures, both in communities and in areas where women and girls seek refuge. These efforts of the Government of Nigeria are in the context of the great strides made by our military in degrading Boko Haram.

In spite of daunting challenges, Nigeria has always been in the vanguard of promoting the involvement of women in conflict resolution, as well as in the promotion of peace and security. In May 2017, Nigeria launched the revised national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions on women, peace and security. The plan reflects our commitment to ensuring the security of women and children during armed conflicts and enhancing their active and direct participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We have also taken measures to enhance the security of women and girls in the camps for internally displaced persons so as to reduce their vulnerability and promote their safe return to their homes and reintegration into society.

As part of efforts to counter violent extremism, Nigeria is taking steps to deradicalize convicted terrorists through the development of a range of experts in psychology and counselors to pioneer rehabilitation efforts, and to utilize Islamic scholars to counter extremist narratives by training them on aspects of dialogue and religious counselling. We are also working assiduously with the affected communities to design economic revitalization programmes targeted at people most affected by terrorism and extremism.

We seize this opportunity to assure the Council that, following the release of some of the abducted Chibok school girls, the Government has intensified its efforts to secure the release of the remaining girls, including freeing them from the ideological grips of Boko Haram terrorists. Having regained their freedom, it is equally important that they regain their self-esteem and be assisted in returning to their families and back to their schools. Furthermore, emergency teams of psychosocial counselors and health professionals have been dispatched to the north-east to assist with the profiling of victims for appropriate therapies.

In addition, the Government of Nigeria has put in motion legal remedies for victims of Boko Haram terrorism in the form of rape and other sexual violence against children, the abduction of children and other grave violations. Other remedies of a legal and social nature taken so far by the Federal Government include the diligent prosecution of 203 detained Boko Haram terrorists in competent courts of law, as well as the reintegration, reorientation and rehabilitation programmes designed to meet the peculiarities of each victim of sexual violence.

The Nigerian Government has launched the Safe Schools initiative, aimed at providing education and piloting safe education facilities in the conflict-affected areas of the north-east. Nigeria also endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, by which it committed to implementing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

Nigeria's laws and policies on the promotion and protection of the rights of children reflect our commitment to the relevant international instruments to which we are signatory. The Government is operating an enabling environment that provides women and children with equal opportunities, protects their rights and facilitates their full participation in society. A national child policy is in place to further facilitate the actualization of the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child's Rights Act.

The Child Rights Act, which was signed into law in 2003, prohibits all physical and mental abuse of children. The Government was at the vanguard of supporting and ratifying the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Article 6 of the Charter sets the minimum age for marriage at 18. The Government has also adopted a national action plan to monitor compliance with international human rights obligations. Within this framework, a Human Rights Commissioner has been appointed as Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Children. The mandate for this position is to monitor and assemble data on child rights abuse.

The Government has also set up agencies with a mandate to protecting children. The National Human Rights Commission, established in 1995 to protect and enforce human rights in general, is very active in the fight against child abuse. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons works in partnership with United Nations agencies and other Government institutions at both the federal and state levels to carry out the fight against trafficking in persons, prevent trafficking, rehabilitate trafficked persons and prosecute offenders, with particular emphasis on trafficking of the girl child.

A national priority agenda for vulnerable children 2013-2020 has been developed as a strategic framework to guide the multisectoral operationalization of the Vision 20:20:20 strategies and objectives of ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable children in Nigeria. Funding has been made available to bolster awareness

of the public. The Government has also created the Children's Parliament, as well as public holidays such as Children's Day and Day of the African Child. Several non-governmental organizations also complement the efforts of the Government in that regard.

The Federal Government has also signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour to establish shelter centres to rehabilitate trafficked children and reunite them with their families. In addition, the Government recently adopted a child labour policy aimed at protecting children against all kinds of abuse in the workplace and all forms of labour that militate against the proper development of the child. This is in line with our approach to fighting human trafficking, which combines law enforcement with policies aimed at the prevention of trafficking and the protection of victims.

The Buhari plan is the current Administration's comprehensive recovery blueprint, which integrates all actors and actions into a coordinated set of activities expected to create traction for the rapid recovery of the north-east from the wreckage caused by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Nigeria is aware of the challenges in the fight to protect children and acknowledges that there is still work to be done. The Government is firmly committed to the task of protecting its women and children, and counts on the continued support of the United Nations in this regard. The Government will uphold all its obligations under relevant international instruments pertaining to international humanitarian law.

If there were any doubt about our commitment to the protection of human rights, the Government, it should now be put to rest. On 4 August, the Government established the National Judicial Commission to look into human rights abuses committed by military personnel in the country. Its mandate is to, among other things, scrutinize the compliance of the armed forces with human rights obligations and rules of engagement, especially in local conflict and insurgency situations; to investigate alleged acts of violation of international humanitarian and human rights law under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1999, the Geneva Convention Act, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant laws by the Nigerian security agencies; and to look at factors that might be hindering the quick resolution of local

conflict and offer solutions on how to prevent human rights violations in times of conflict in the future.

Nigeria commends the work of all the United Nations agencies — including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Nigeria, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Women, UNICEF, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as international donors — that are actively working with Nigeria to ensure the restoration of peace, security and development in the north-east. However, Nigeria also believes that better the coordination and coherence of the work of these United Nations agencies in the region would enhance efficiency in the work being done in Nigeria. That would achieve better results and avoid situations where agencies work at cross-purposes.

As we speak, all the service chiefs are in the north-east. The number of military and paramilitary personnel have been increased in the internally displaced persons camps and in the north-east. We recommit to ensuring that women and children enjoy full rights, and that those who have perpetrated sexual violence are dealt with in accordance with our national laws and international obligations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General to respond to the comments and questions raised.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I want to reiterate my deep appreciation to the Council for giving us this opportunity to speak on this issue. It is a critical one that strikes at the core of human rights, which are women's rights. It is inhumane and strips women of their dignity. It is a scar for life and often visits families beyond that one person, and certainly many children that are born as a result.

In answering the question that was put forward by the representative of France, this trip in and of itself was really also a response to what we felt was putting life into the just texts that the Council has adopted in resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2242 (2015), but really trying to explain better what it is that we would be looking at in countries where we want to see prevention and sustaining peace a reality and how to make the investments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a reality.

I think that in this trip it was very clear that both Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 17 were

critical — that without strong institutions we cannot make the demands of those aspirations that we have for the Agenda. It is therefore important that we begin to think of what sort of investments are going to be needed up front if we are to really see many national Governments responding to closing the gap between the reality and the aspirations. I think we got keen insights into that issue, just as we also did with respect to partnerships, making many frameworks we have between the United Nations and other institutions a reality.

I think in that regard we were trying to walk the talk and move very quickly into seeing how, with the African Union, we could change the narrative in making implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 a reality. What better entry point is there for looking at the most vulnerable populations? Which are also the largest populations? We talk about 50 per cent of our populations, 50 per cent of our assets that need investments, need protecting and need their human rights. It was wonderful to get the response that we got.

This trip was the supposed to also include a trip to South Sudan. We were not able to go there due to unforeseen circumstances, but with this response we will now be able to look not only at the African region but at other regions as well, in order to draw together these issues, give a comprehensive view and bring to everyone's continuous notice the complexities and different ranges of context, not just in the conflicts that we have seen in Africa but also across other regions.

It is critical when we do make these trips, as we felt very strongly in both cases, that what we see and what we come back with needs follow-up. We lose integrity when we return from these trips and we cannot follow up with the promises and the commitments that were made. In particular, I would like to thank both Governments.

In Nigeria, we heard from young girls that they faced a challenge. While they were appreciative of the fact that they had a camp, security and a home, they were totally devastated by the daily situation of having to exchange sex for food. This fact made a very powerful impression on us. How could we let that girl go back? Well, fortunately for us, one of the recommendations we made was, very simply, to change the policy. The people dealing with the distribution of food in camps should be women, not men. One should start with that change, and in the course of our interactions with the Nigerian Government we were able to get it agreed to.

Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we heard women talk about the need not so much for more security from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo when they returned either into host communities or their own communities, but for more microcredit. We could see tents where we they were using coal as fuel for their cookstoves, which was harmful for children. Upon our return, we were able to ask those who were involved with the clean cookstoves programme if they could scale-up the programme across all the camps where this was happening, and actually replace the stoves.

I think that these are concrete things that make a difference when we go on a field visit, we come back and something happens. We were also able to expand the microcredit for those women for that period. But so much more is needed. So I hope that every trip we

make will result in commitments that become a reality in people's lives.

Once again, I want to say that we will revert to members of the Council. We are committed to attaining zero gender-based violence, particularly in conflict, and to holding Governments and, hopefully, all those who perpetrate these crimes to account. It is important that this be seen as a work in progress. People live in different realities. I think we saw immense challenges, but also many opportunities; and we believe that, together, we can go much further.

I would just like to underscore our appreciation to the Council for creating more opportunities to make this work. Council members' visits to many countries, including Colombia and the Lake Chad basin, have made it possible for us to raise our ambitions in terms of what we do.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.