



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9064th meeting

Wednesday, 15 June 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Xhaçka/Mr. Hoxha	(Albania)
<i>Members:</i>	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mrs. Gasri
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Ms. Osei-Asare
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Haugsbakken
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Keeping the promises: the role of regional organizations in implementing the women and peace and security agenda in the face of political turmoil and seizures of power by force

Letter dated 4 June 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/457)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Keeping the promises: the role of regional organizations in implementing the women and peace and security agenda in the face of political turmoil and seizures of power by force

Letter dated 4 June 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/457)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Italy, Indonesia, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Morocco, Namibia, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye, Ukraine, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women; Her Excellency Ms. Helga Maria Schmid, Secretary-General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; Ms. Bineta Diop, Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission; Her Excellency Ms. Stella Ronner-Grubačić, European Union Ambassador for Gender and Diversity; and Ms. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, Assistant Secretary-General, Head of Social Affairs Sector at the League of Arab States.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/457, which contains the text of a letter dated 4 June 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General and the Ministers and other high-level representatives present today. Their presence underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: Gender equality offers a path to sustainable peace and conflict prevention, and yet we are moving in the opposite direction. Today's conflicts are amplifying gender inequality, poverty, climate disruptions and other forms of inequality. Women and girls are affected differently and disproportionately by the violence and by the long-term social and economic impacts of those cascading crises. Millions of girls are out of school, with no prospect of training, a job or financial independence. Rising numbers of women and girls are suffering from violence in the home.

In some countries, extremists and military actors have taken power by force, cancelling previous commitments on gender equality and persecuting women for simply going about their daily lives.

Around the world, the recent shift away from inclusive politics shows once again that misogyny and authoritarianism are mutually reinforcing and are antithetical to stable, prosperous societies.

We meet several times a year on this issue. There is consensus among Member States on the importance of this agenda. I issue regular reports; the Security Council has adopted several resolutions. But on the ground the situation is going backwards. The reason is simple.

Women's equality is a question of power. Today's political deadlocks and entrenched conflicts are just the latest examples of how enduring power imbalances and patriarchy are continuing to fail us.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban appointed a Government of men, closed girls' schools, banned women from showing their faces in public and restricted their right even to leave their own homes. Nearly 20 million Afghan women and girls are being silenced and erased from sight.

In Myanmar, a large proportion of women's organizations have been forced to close since the military coup. Offices were raided and ransacked; activists were detained. Many fled the country. Women

cannot express themselves openly and have no route to political participation.

In Mali, women are becoming poorer and more marginalized as the country goes through successive military coups and extremists pose an even greater threat.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has forced millions of women and children to flee their country overnight, putting them at high risk of trafficking and exploitation of all kinds.

Last week, the Security Council heard that, as of 3 June, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had received 124 reports of conflict-related sexual violence across Ukraine, mostly committed against women and girls. We know that for every woman who reports those horrific crimes, there are likely to be many more who remain silent or unrecorded.

Women refugees are taking on leadership roles and supporting the response in host countries. Inside Ukraine, women who chose not to evacuate are at the forefront of health care and social support. It is important that Ukrainian women fully participate in all mediation efforts.

In the Sudan, two years after women's role in the revolution was celebrated, another coup interrupted the transition and dashed those hopes. Alleged perpetrators of human rights violations remain in power; key reforms are delayed; and violence against women continues.

In all those conflicts, we have men in power and women excluded, their rights and freedoms deliberately targeted.

When conflict erupts, neighbouring countries and regional organizations can make a significant difference to the women and peace and security agenda by ensuring that commitments are implemented. I am therefore pleased that we are joined today by representatives of the European Union, the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Our collaboration on the women and peace and security agenda with those organizations is reflected not only in joint statements and resolutions, but also in our daily work on the ground.

In the Sudan, for example, we are working closely with the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, through a trilateral mechanism, to steer the political process back to an

agreed and legitimate constitutional order. As they launched intra-Sudanese talks, all three envoys asked every delegation to ensure that at least 40 per cent of participants are women.

We have also supported the formation of a stand-alone group of women from all regions of the Sudan with a background on gender equality and experience working on women's rights at the local level to bring women's perspectives to the political talks. I urge regional organizations to strengthen their engagement with that group.

In West and Central Africa, we are working closely with both the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States. Our collaboration on women and peace and security extends to joint planning and programming and joint engagement with civil society platforms to ensure that women are involved in early warning and mediation.

We have also been deepening our collaboration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on such issues over the past five years. That will be crucial to finding a solution to the crisis in Myanmar that reflects the needs of all the country's people, including women in the diaspora and in Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

(spoke in French)

The United Nations continues to demonstrate its commitment to supporting women and civil society organizations working for peace through its peacebuilding and political missions around the world.

In Afghanistan, we are unequivocal about the fundamental rights of women and girls, including their right to complete their education and pursue a career. I commend the Security Council for its unanimous support in that regard.

In all our peacekeeping and political missions, we continue to support survivors of sexual violence and invest in partnerships with local women leaders and peacebuilders, including by increasing the number of women personnel at all levels.

At the most senior level, we are in particular working to maintain the parity achieved among Heads and Deputy Heads of Missions since early 2021.

Supporting survivors of sexual violence, as well as women peacebuilders and activists, is key. There

is increasing evidence that ensuring women's rights, including their right to equal participation at all levels, is essential to building and maintaining peace.

The participation of women in mediation and decision-making processes is vital to conflict resolution. Their analysis is critical to understanding conflict dynamics and building effective response and prevention strategies. Studies also show that the active engagement of women peacebuilders increases the chances of lasting peace. That is why we need full gender parity across election monitoring, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and justice systems, including by setting quotas.

That is one reason that my proposed New Agenda for Peace, included in my report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), puts women and girls at the centre of security policies. But, despite all the evidence, the women and peace and security agenda continues to be challenged, and even reversed, around the world. I urge Council members and all Member States to consider why that is.

I urge participants to reflect on the fact that, despite general agreement on the value of women at the negotiating table, there is still such a huge gap in their participation and in the implementation of commitments to their protection, human rights and dignity. I encourage participants to commit to increasing support to women's civil society, conflict prevention and peacebuilding work.

At this time of proliferating crises, the international community must pursue proven strategies for maintaining peace and stability. Protecting and promoting women's rights is such a strategy. The women and peace and security agenda is one of our greatest assets in building a more peaceful future on a sustainable planet.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bahous.

Ms. Bahous: As we just heard from the Secretary-General, our world is facing the highest number of violent conflicts since 1945. By some estimates, democracy around the world has been backsliding for 16 consecutive years. Climate change is further increasing inequalities and fuelling tensions. As with all crises and conflicts, drought and desertification are directly increasing gender-based violence.

Those inter-related facts hold us all back from achieving our aspirations, and women and girls are bearing the brunt of descent into conflicts or coups. That cannot continue. It is contrary to everything that has been agreed and decided in this Chamber, starting with resolution 1325 (2000). It is contrary to our collective promise in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a more sustainable and peaceful future.

It was also committed to in March this year at the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which resulted in the first-ever agreed conclusions focusing on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the context of climate, environment and disaster risk reduction. We must all work together to realize the promises made at the CSW.

War and conflict impact the entire life cycle of women and girls — from disrupting education to early forced marriage, sexual and gender-based violence, insufficient livelihoods, food insecurity and lack of access to shelter, sanitation and dignity. It sets us back decades.

Look to Ukraine, where the war has now surpassed 100 painful days. Reports of sexual violence are increasing, human trafficking is increasing and millions — mostly women, children and older persons — have fled their homes. Look to Syria, where 11 years of conflict has led to a surge in early forced marriage, gender-based violence and mass displacement. Look to the Sahel, where growing violent extremism is driving inequalities, food insecurity and violence. In all those conflicts, women face additional threats to their bodies, their livelihoods and their safety. Nevertheless, women are risking their lives as leaders in their communities, heads of households, peacebuilders and mediators.

In the year 2000, through resolution 1325 (2000), we agreed to protect women and girls in situations of conflict and to ensure that women are front and centre in peace efforts. We have further sharpened those commitments through nine subsequent resolutions.

Many in this Chamber have made national commitments as well, notably through national action plans on resolution 1325 (2000). We now have 100 national action plans globally. I applaud that historic figure. Even during the trials of the past years, Member States managed to continue that work. The United

Arab Emirates, Malawi and Morocco are among the countries that announced their first national action plans on resolution 1325 (2000) in the past year.

Most regional organizations have also committed to that path. Twelve regional organizations have adopted action plans on women, peace and security — up from five when we celebrated the resolution's fifteenth anniversary in 2015. We applaud regional organizations for their efforts.

What we have seen is that, when Member States get together and make commitments in the halls of regional organizations, national actions often follow. For example, once the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) committed to that goal, 12 out of the 15 countries in that region followed suit. The African Union committed to ensuring that half of its members would adopt plans by 2020 and has surpassed that target.

Regional organizations have also played a key role in the development of networks of women mediators. Nearly every region and subregion now has at least one such network. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has had a registry of women experts in peace and mediation since 2018. The African Women Leaders Network has 29 national chapters now, and FemWise-Africa regularly deploys its members to peace processes and national dialogues led by the African Union.

More recently, networks were launched that cover the Southern Cone in the Americas and the Arab States region. The Arab Women Mediators Network is the first of its kind, bringing together Arabic-speaking women leaders to be deployed to local and regional mediation processes. I encourage all Member States to utilize these networks.

Yet, with all this institutional progress, almost every time there are political negotiations or peace talks, we still have to ask, "where are the women?" The reason is simply that we have not fully honoured our commitments.

Take the Sahel, where we have the Group of Five for the Sahel Women's Platform, the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the ECOWAS Region, the West African Network of Young Female Leaders and others. Many in the Security Council are members of the Group of Friends of Women in the Sahel, co-chaired by the African Union and the European Union. Yet we

often see that the analysis and inputs from the platform are not adequately reflected in political updates.

In the Great Lakes region, there is significant investment in mobilizing women and peace and security actors. The ministers of the member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region just adopted a new plan, and we have the Regional Women Forum and the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region.

But those activities seem separate from the political talks to bring about a solution to the rising violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where an increase in attacks by the Mouvement du 23 Mars and the Allied Democratic Forces and the growing influence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham has led to the killing, rape, abduction and displacement of so many Congolese women once again.

We must ensure that women's networks and tracks are part and parcel of the political tracks, that women are equally included and that their voices and solutions are heard and included. I ask that the multilateral system — all of us — defend our values with the same determination as the women's movement does. I ask that we all be undeterred by the current challenges and negative developments. If we are to do that, we must honour our commitments and ensure that all response efforts fully include the voices of women leaders. We must ensure that women are part and parcel of finding peaceful solutions and of recovery and prevention mechanisms.

When regional organizations convene negotiations, they must ensure that they do not have to ask where the women are. They must make sure that the women are there — in their own right, with their own lived experiences, knowledge and vision for their future.

As was confirmed in the recent evacuation of human rights defenders and others from Afghanistan, we must all do a better job to provide support, protection and, in many cases, asylum, temporary relocation or protected status to people in harm's way facing gender-based persecution.

Regional organizations can spur those reforms in both legislation and administrative procedures among their membership. Less than a month ago, the Council of Europe adopted a new recommendation to protect the rights of migrant, asylum-seeking or refugee women and girls in the wake of the displacement of millions of Ukrainians.

Let us also recall that civil society is our vital partner in such situations, yet often pays a heavy price when conflicts begin and its funding becomes jeopardized.

Last year, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund supported 215 civil society organizations, reaching 10.6 million people directly and indirectly, including forcibly displaced women, women and girls with disabilities and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The Fund also facilitated the evacuation of several Afghan women and dependents after the Taliban takeover, providing vital one-off emergency funds. The Fund is also providing life-saving support to women's organizations in Ukraine that stay and continue to deliver services.

In Mali, the Fund directly supported young women with income diversification, entrepreneurial and business opportunities. By investing in livelihoods, we invest in the future and in an inclusive and sustainable recovery.

In conclusion, I hope those examples inspire us all. For our part, as UN-Women and partners, we plan to do much more. But we need the international community, including all regional organizations, to stand in solidarity with us and fully honour the commitments we have made to women and girls in conflict situations.

That is how we restore the balance, gain a chance of peace and stand up, together, for our shared values. The peace and security to which we aspire will only be possible when women play a central role.

The President: I thank Ms. Bahous for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Schmid.

Ms. Schmid: I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to address today's open debate on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, which is a top priority for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and for me personally.

We are living through extremely challenging times. Russia's war on Ukraine is having a devastating impact on innocent civilians and infrastructure and is in direct contradiction to the core principles that underpin the European and global security order. Women and girls have been the victims of rape and are at high risk of trafficking and violence. The consequences of the war against Ukraine are also threatening food and energy security. The prices of food and basic goods are increasing with disastrous economic and humanitarian

consequences on the poorest households, many of which are actually headed by women. Communities in Ukraine are not only exposed to violence and destruction, but also to air and water pollution, and to hazardous-waste contamination, including radioactive pollution that does not stop at the border.

Women are often the primary managers of their households, and they rely on natural resources. However, they face persistent barriers to meaningful participation in natural-resource governance mechanisms and decision-making processes. In addition, we continue to bear the consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic that has increased gender inequalities as well as the impact of climate change, to which the previous speaker rightly referred. In these challenging times, it is critical to ensure the role of women not just in peacebuilding and conflict resolution but also in decision-making in general.

The OSCE is playing a vital role in this regard. Our approach is a holistic one. We support women's leadership and their direct participation in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Together with UN-Women Moldova, we provided targeted capacity-building support to women negotiators from the Republic of Moldova on both sides of the Dniester River. The OSCE Mission to Moldova continues to liaise closely with United Nations on the ground to establish a women's advisory board to the Transnistrian settlement process.

I am a huge believer in networking. We support women networking. In 2021, I launched the OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders including Peacebuilders and Mediators. This platform includes women from Ukraine and Afghanistan, and let me just say — and previous speakers have also referred to this — the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan is particularly appalling, and I could not agree more with the Secretary-General on his appeal in this respect.

What we try to do with our network is support women who are involved in peacebuilding activities and allow them to share experience and practices in a safe space. We amplify women's voices. Recently, I convened a special meeting with women from Ukraine, including women peacebuilders and front-line humanitarian workers. We discussed the impact of war on their daily lives, learned about their concrete needs and heard their recommendations for possible actions for the OSCE and its participating States. The

recommendations will not only inform our future work in Ukraine, but also support dialogue at the local level.

We support survivors of gender-based violence. We do so by strengthening the capacity of service providers, networking women's resource centres and developing police- and justice-sector training curricula to deal with domestic-violence cases. We provide assistance to prevent trafficking of human beings, including by issuing specific recommendations to States to address the risks of online exploitation.

We strengthen women's participation and leadership in the security sector, in particular in the areas of conflict prevention, arms control and disarmament. To date, over 320 young women from across the OSCE region have participated in our Scholarship for Peace and Security Programme's training programme, which is a joint initiative with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, to deepen their knowledge on conflict prevention, arms control and disarmament.

In the OSCE, we also strive to lead by example. Over two thirds of the participating States have adopted action plans to implement resolution 1325 (2000), and over 40 per cent of leadership positions in the organization are held by women.

These are just a few examples of contributions that regional organizations, such as the OSCE, are making. As ever, more needs to be done to achieve full cooperation at the international and regional levels. To keep our promises to advance gender equality, we need to go even further, working together to ensure that the needs of women in conflict are adequately addressed, and that women are part of the decision-making processes at all levels, which also includes the very important legislative dimension.

The OSCE is committed to gender equality. We are committed to our close cooperation with the United Nations. And we are committed to working together across our region and with our partners around the world to advance peace and security, and gender equality is critical to that.

The President: I thank Ms. Schmid for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Diop.

Ms. Diop: Allow me, Madam President, to congratulate you and, through you, the Republic of Albania, for steering the work of the Security Council in the month of June 2022, and for making sure that we devote this meeting on women, peace and security

to the role of regional organizations in implementing the women and peace and security agenda in the face of political turmoil and seizures of power by force. This is a timely topic indeed, especially now that unconstitutional changes of Government, including the resurgence of military coups, have accelerated on the African continent, with dire consequences for the human security of women and girls, including access to socioeconomic services and rights.

Let me just emphasize the situation in the Sahel region, where terrorists attacks continue to prevail. The women themselves say that they are doubly affected — not just by coups, but also by terrorist attacks.

As we know, frequently, the condition that leads to a military coup is gender exclusion and gender inequality, where one half of humankind constantly endures economic and social exploitation, deprivation and political disenfranchisement. Indeed, violence against women, gendered poverty, the exclusion of women from decision-making in politics and economics are not only examples of gender inequality, but also indicators of poor undemocratic governance that disrespects people's human rights. We could therefore say that a coup d'état does not redress a situation such as the one I have just described, but rather, it exacerbates such a situation.

We know that research has proved that gender inequality is the number one form of inequality, that it is the number one predictor of the fragility of peace, and that full participation of all citizens, both men and women, is the best way to build sustained democracies, reduce conflict and achieve human development. That is what the women and peace and security agenda stands for and, if it is fully implemented, it will contribute to addressing the devastating situation.

In Africa, we have continued to advance the women and peace and security agenda despite the emergence of coups and the deterioration of the security situation. Right now, 58 per cent of our member States have adopted national action plans — many of them will be addressing this open debate.

Let me also emphasize that the African Union has strong instruments at its disposal, including the African Governance Architecture, which is the core organ mandated to promote good governance, as well as the African Peace and Security Architecture. Their full implementation is essential, and we therefore need to focus on how the United Nations could work

with the AU to implement those two architectures. I think that will help to prevent the situation that we are experiencing today by ensuring good governance, access to resources and the prevention of conflict through dialogue and inclusion.

In particular, the need for the participation of women in decision-making and leadership roles must be recognized. I applaud the efforts made by the Secretary-General to work closely with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, to make sure that we implement the two agendas in Africa. We also thank the United Nations for its support on the women and peace and security agenda.

In our recent report issued in 2022, my Office conducted a study in the Sahel with the support of Luxembourg. The study provided evidence of the multiple impacts of coups and related insecurity, climate change and the pandemic on the situation of women in the Sahel, where women's fundamental rights and freedoms, service delivery, access to food, livelihoods and protection from violence and abuse have deteriorated.

Therefore, in order to promote the inclusion of women in peace and security efforts, we have deployed several tools, of which I shall name a few.

First, we are conducting a solidarity mission with the African Women Leaders Network to go on the ground and talk to the women who are affected. As I speak now, a technical team with support from UN-Women is in Mali to follow up on our previous solidarity mission, which we undertook with the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed. The team is supporting women peacebuilders and leaders in their efforts to advocate for women's inclusion in the ongoing negotiations and the process for a return to political stability, the holding of elections and the drafting of the new constitution. As the Executive Director of UN-Women said, the FemWise-Africa Network is another platform through which women are participating in mediation and negotiation efforts in various regions.

The African Union has maintained cooperation with the regional economic communities, which have served as useful platforms for building the capacity of various actors. My Office, the Office of the Special Envoy, is working with member States, women's organizations, think tanks and centres of excellence dealing with women and peace and security, building their capacities

to enhance accountability and, in particular, countering violence and abuse against women and girls.

Last year, we launched the first men's conference on positive masculinity in leadership for the elimination of violence against women and girls, to address impunity and to call for accountability. It was attended by more than 15 Heads of States from our continent, who took the floor to address those issues and made the commitment to fight against violence against women.

We are also deploying a continental results framework to track the delivery of the commitments made by our member States to end violence against women and girls and to provide quality and efficient responses. So far, 20 African member States have reported back, and those results were issued in a report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission last year. We are also working on ensuring that we complement the reports of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security in that regard.

As I conclude, let me congratulate the Security Council on its numerous initiatives to promote the women and peace and security agenda, including through its dedicated rotating presidency focused on women and peace and security. What we need now is to make sure that we take action together with regional organizations such as the African Union, as well as regional economic communities. While women welcome the debate, they are asking for action, deliverables and impact.

The President: I thank Ms. Diop for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Ronner-Grubačić.

Ms. Ronner-Grubačić: With the return of war in Europe and against the backdrop of increasing pushbacks on women's rights and gender equality, it is more important than ever to safeguard and promote our shared values, as well as to uphold international commitments and a rules-based multilateral order with the United Nations at its core. That holds true for the women and peace and security agenda, adopted with resolution 1325 (2000), and for any other international instrument or Security Council resolution.

The Albanian presidency of the Council is right to point out in its concept note (S/2022/457, annex) that regional organizations have a critical role to play. It is also right to draw our attention to the fact that, in times of turmoil in particular, it is all too often the case that commitments on women and peace and

security are interrupted and women — whether they be journalists, peacebuilders, members of parliament or representatives of civil society — see their work, safety and security threatened, or worse. Unfortunately, as the European Union (EU) Ambassador for Gender and Diversity, I have witnessed that happening on several occasions. I can testify, on the basis of my own experience, how difficult it is to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation, despite the positive messages of intent shared by all.

Even in times of immediate crisis and political turmoil, women continue to be left out of the political dialogue on their country's future, as we are seeing now in Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Sudan, Yemen and Syria, *inter alia*. When decisions need to be made, including in this Chamber, women remain underrepresented. We need to start discussing that reality.

We are currently standing at a crossroads, with different directions to choose from. I see that we have two options. We can continue on the road of more talk than action, or we can agree to accelerate our action, including in times of immediate crisis and the unlawful takeover of countries, to guarantee women's participation in all our diplomacy and political dialogue. We can do our utmost so that gender equality and the role of women are part of the immediate response and not deprioritized, as is so often the case.

As a concrete example of support for women's empowerment, the EU launched the Afghan Women Leaders Forum in March. The Forum provides a platform for Afghan women from diverse backgrounds within and outside Afghanistan to contribute to the political dialogue of the EU and the wider international community on the future of Afghanistan. Therefore, the Forum presents an alternative space to express their views for women who are not included in the political dialogue in their own country and see their rights violated in all imaginable and possible ways.

Today we are also confronted with the crimes committed by Russian armed forces in Ukraine. The EU continues to support Ukraine, in close coordination with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. There too, in that war waged by Russia on Ukrainian territory, we see that women's dignity and rights are being trampled on. The war in Ukraine is another example of how we need to pay particular attention to working together with local and regional organizations to make sure that our understanding of the situation — and therefore our

action and approach — are based on reliable information and facts on the ground.

It is because of the appeal of such organizations — women's organizations that have started to collect evidence and document cases of conflict-related sexual violence — that the mandate of the EU's civilian Common Security and Defence Policy Advisory Mission to Ukraine was amended to support the Ukrainian authorities in investigating international crimes, including conflict-related crimes of sexual violence. We have also taken steps to address the increased risks of trafficking facing those fleeing the conflict, especially women and children, through the adoption of a common anti-trafficking plan. Without the role of regional organizations, we would not have been able to take that important step.

Just as is the case in Afghanistan, where we have women representing various kinds of local and regional networks and organizations, the situation in Ukraine shows the way that we should go about it. We have to listen, we have to pay more attention and, above all, we must make sure to feed the views and positions of women into our political dialogue and decision-making. And we must do so promptly. That means not waiting to deal with that issue until the other so-called more important issues have been dealt with first.

I have just given two examples of how it actually can be done — how we can bring women into our political discussions and dialogue and have them participate meaningfully in them. It can be done. It just requires a deliberate effort and a consistent and continuous banging on the door of those places where conflict and peace are being addressed. The Security Council is such a place. Actually, it is the highest-level organ for the discussion of peace and security. That is why I am grateful to Albania for having put this issue on the agenda.

The EU is fully committed to doing its part, in line with its action plan on women, peace and security and as demonstrated by our actions, both internally and externally. Gender mainstreaming is a guiding principle of our 18 civilian and military missions and operations and a priority of our external action. We have committed to ensuring that 85 per cent of all EU external action will have a gender dimension by 2025. In all regions, from the Sahel to the Middle East, Central Africa and Asia, we support capacity-building and monitoring actions for women's leadership, we contribute to women's networks, and we work closely

with civil society, grass-roots organizations and UN-Women.

I would like to conclude by saying: Let us do this much more often; let us get together and discuss how we can and how we need to make sure that women are offered a chance to participate meaningfully in our discussions. As a concrete outcome of today's meeting, I propose relaunching the Regional Acceleration Resolution 1325 mechanism, a platform to facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned among the United Nations, the EU, the African Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We welcome additional partners, such as the League of Arab States. Let us do whatever it takes because it is 2022. Our daughters and sons will not understand why we were not capable of doing that.

The President: I thank Ms. Ronner-Grubačić for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Abu Ghazaleh.

Ms. Abu Ghazaleh: I wish to congratulate Albania on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June and to thank the President of the Council for convening this open debate on women and peace and security.

This invitation comes in the framework of consolidating the exciting cooperation between the Council and the League of Arab States (LAS) in the area of maintaining international peace and security, which culminates in the annual meeting held by the Council to discuss cooperation with LAS, with the participation of His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres and His Excellency Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit.

That growing cooperation resulted in the adoption of presidential statements S/PRST/2019/5 under the presidency of Kuwait in 2019, S/PRST/2021/2 under the presidency of Tunisia in 2021 and S/PRST/2022/1 under the presidency of the United Arab Emirates in March. All three statements focus on women and peace and security as one of the main axes of the growing cooperation among the LAS, the United Nations and other regional organizations, especially the African Union, which put this issue before the Council at the initiative of Namibia, resulting in the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000).

Twenty-one years later, the Arab region continues to witness crises and conflicts, while women's potential

to build peace remains untapped in the region. Sporadic progress has been seen. In order to pursue an end to the conflicts, calls are being made for the de-escalation of conflicts and for women's equal and meaningful participation in their peaceful resolution. The League of Arab States, in line with its mandate, has been supporting efforts to reach political solutions and broker ceasefires initiated at the national level that allow parties to establish legitimate, accountable and effective Governments.

In 2015, the LAS formulated a regional strategy for women and peace and security in support of its member States' efforts to develop national action plans to implement resolution 1325 (2000). In that framework in 2019, the LAS established the Arab Women Mediators Network as a regional mediation instrument, in line with resolution 1325 (2000). It is made up of high-level diplomats from the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of member States of the region. It has established a strategy and action plan, which provide a framework to guide the establishment of national mediation networks.

The LAS also initiated the establishment of the Emergency Committee for Protection of Women during Armed Conflicts in the Arab region, in response to the efforts made by the women of the region. In that context, several related strategies have been adopted to support, strengthen and protect women in peace and security initiatives, such as the Arab strategy for prevention and response to combat all forms of violence in refugee situations, especially sexual violence against women and girls, and the strategy of the Arab Women Mediation Network. Moreover, in cooperation with UN-Women, the League of Arab States has developed Women, Peace and Security in the Arab Region, an initiative aimed at providing the technical assistance and political guidance needed for every aspect of the commitments related to women and peace and security. Its first and second synthesis reports were issued at the regional level on the progress made in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) after 15 years in the Arab region, and to monitor progress in implementing our regional strategy and executive action plan, Protecting Arab Women: Security and Peace 2016-2018, as well as a guide for preparing national plans for women, peace and security.

I would like to end by suggesting that the Secretary-General appoint a special envoy for women and peace and security. Moreover, since we now also

have Ms. Bahous here, we call on the Security Council to adopt a new resolution on women and mediation.

The President: I thank Ms. Abu Ghazaleh for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania.

I would like to sincerely thank all the briefers and the Secretary-General for their statements and the very valuable information they provided at this meeting. We heard important, accurate and first-hand accounts from them, from different perspectives and regions, which feed into the collective efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda. Yes, the right word is the implementation of a very robust normative framework. We have the resolutions. We need action. And we need more concrete and tangible results.

We know that regional and subregional organizations have continued to play pivotal roles in their respective regions in the areas of peace and security and human rights and development, including in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. The role of regional organizations in matters related to the women and peace and security agenda has become increasingly important, given the magnitude and complexity of the challenges facing the international community today. Recent events in various countries and regions, such as Ukraine, Afghanistan, the Sudan, Myanmar and Mali, to name only a few, have shown how fragile the progress we have made in the field of women and peace and security continues to be.

Because of the war in Ukraine, as the Council has heard many times, including on Monday last week (see S/PV.9056), the substantive gains in the area of women's rights and gender equality made in recent years have been put under immense pressure, if not entirely undone. Today Ukrainian women and girls are facing what may be the biggest challenge of their lives. Unlawful attacks on civilian facilities, including schools and hospitals, are depriving them of access to education and essential health services. The women and girls who have been forced to flee their homes have found themselves in situations that exacerbate inequality and vulnerability and have been confronted by sexual and gender-based violence. We are appalled by the reports of alleged sexual violence, which should be fully documented and properly investigated.

In Afghanistan, since the violent takeover of the Taliban in August 2021, women have been systematically erased from public life, and those who have protested have been violently repressed, abducted, killed or subjected to other forms of reprisals. It is deeply worrying that despite promises and commitments, girls continue to be denied an education. That is unacceptable.

In the Sudan, Myanmar and Mali, the violence that has erupted has threatened not just the fragile gains of the women and peace and security agenda, but the very lives and work of women peacebuilders themselves, and has also tested the ability of the international community to fulfil the mandate of the Council in maintaining international peace and security.

As we heard today, a large number of regional organizations, including the European Union, the African Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the League of Arab States have adopted or are about to adopt dedicated plans and strategies to implement and prioritize the agenda for women and peace and security. That is a wonderful development. Regional organizations are often the first to react in crisis response and to engage with the parties concerned to ensure the protection of civilians. They are uniquely placed to build trust and promote dialogue among the parties involved, as well as to offer support in mediation and reconciliation, and can be influential in advocating for women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in all aspects of peace and security. We must strengthen the partnerships and coordination with such regional organizations and make their voices heard in the Security Council and in the broader United Nations system. In many ways, regional organizations have unique and complementary capacities, which when properly coordinated with the United Nations system can produce good, fast and effective results in preserving and or accelerating the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, especially in contexts of political turmoil and the seizure of power by force.

While many regional organizations already cooperate closely with each other, it will be important to intensify that cooperation and gradually build a network of regional organizations aiming to improve data disaggregation, produce gender analyses, share best practices and coordinate gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches to ensure the meaningful inclusion of women, especially those from traditionally

marginalized groups, in political and peace and security processes. It is crucial for regional organizations to work closely with civil society and especially women-led organizations at the grassroots level. Regional organizations must be able to support safe and enabling environments for women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil-society activists. In coordination with the United Nations system, with Member States and with one another, regional organizations can provide rapid, flexible funding to women human rights defenders and women-led organizations operating in conflict and post-conflict settings. To that end, we must ensure that all regional organizations prioritize the women and peace and security agenda and develop action plans and strategies to implement it, in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant Security Council resolutions.

Through its participation within several regional organizations, such as the OSCE, NATO and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Albania is committed to fulfilling its duty regarding the acceleration and full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. The women and peace and security agenda was integrated as one of the priorities of Albania's OSCE Chairmanship in 2020, injecting new momentum into its work in promoting the role of women in conflict resolution and peace processes. We are happy to see that the OSCE continues to prioritize women and peace and security. As a member of NATO, Albania is working tirelessly to reduce barriers to the active and meaningful participation of women in security institutions at the national level and within the Alliance. Women today constitute almost 20 per cent of Albania's total armed forces personnel. In the OIC, Albania is fully engaged and very supportive of every initiative that aims to strengthen the meaningful participation of women at all levels, and to accelerate the women and peace and security agenda and the normative framework adopted by the Security Council over the years.

I am very happy to report on some real, bold and significant achievements on the meaningful participation of women in important decision-making processes in my country. Albania currently ranks among the top five most gender-balanced Governments in the world, with women making up 75 per cent of its ministers. Some of the top public positions in Albania — including in independent institutions, agencies and departments in key areas of the State — are successfully held by women. Albania has taken important steps towards

officially embracing gender-responsive budgeting at both the central and local levels.

It is time to engage in a new level of cooperation with regional organizations. Only by working together at the various levels can we close the huge gap between what has been achieved on paper and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda on the ground. Such cooperation is especially vital in the context of recent military coups and seizures of power by force, as a result of which we have witnessed abrupt interruptions to national commitments on women and peace and security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the Permanent Representative of the United States and member of President Biden's Cabinet.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today's vital debate. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres for participating today.

I would also like to express my appreciation to all the briefers and to the representatives of regional organizations who have joined us today. The role of regional organizations is critical to elevating the women and peace and security agenda, and we welcome their willingness to do more and the critical role that they all play in their respective organizations.

We have seen the disproportionate threats women and girls face in countries and conflicts around the world, including in Mali, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ukraine, Ethiopia and elsewhere. I would like to point out that several United Nations sanctions regimes, such as those for South Sudan and Yemen, include designation criteria for those who perpetrate violence against women. We encourage the Security Council to continue to use those tools, as it did for Osama Al Kuni Ibrahim, a notorious human trafficker in Libya.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban has constrained — and in many areas eliminated — women's participation in political, economic and social spaces. They have made no less than a dozen formal announcements since last September restricting the rights of women and girls. Once again, we reiterate our call on the Taliban to reverse those restrictions on education, employment and movement. We urge the Taliban to allow women to fully and meaningfully participate in Afghan society. The contributions of women will allow Afghanistan to

prosper in the years ahead, but the exclusion of women and girls will erase the possibility of stability and economic gains in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, we cannot talk about the women and peace and security agenda without reflecting on the consequences of Russia's horrific invasion of Ukraine and the disproportionate impact that it has had on women. As we made clear earlier this month, we continue to see mounting credible reports of atrocities committed by Russia's forces against civilians, including horrific accounts of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence. There must be accountability for those atrocities, as well as those committed by others against women and girls. Perpetrators cannot act with impunity. Regional organizations must also play a role in that regard, and we are committed to working with them.

As we use every tool at our disposal, we must also look together to strengthen prevention efforts, promote justice in its various forms and provide trauma-informed support services for survivors in the near and longer terms. However, one thing that I would like to make clear is not lost on us is that women are not passive victims. They are survivors. They are courageous and are consistently on the front lines of peacebuilding, at both the grass-roots and the national levels. Women actively take steps to protect their communities from conflict. They bring a unique understanding of local and regional dynamics to the peace processes that are necessary for establishing sustainable agreements.

Prioritizing the women's peace and security agenda will not just change the lives of women and girls; it will also plant the seed for a more peaceful future for them, which is why we must make meaningful and lasting progress in addressing gender inequality at all levels of our society. As several speakers stressed, we must take action in addition to words. We must address harmful gender and societal norms. We must not, as a Syrian woman told me during my recent visit to Turkey, stop feeling a sense of outrage at the violence and atrocities committed against women.

We must continue to promote the full participation and inclusion of women in decision-making roles at all levels of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. For our part, through the passage of the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017, the United States became the first country in the world to codify its commitment to advancing resolution 1325 (2000) by enacting a comprehensive women and peace and security law. The 2019 United States Strategy

on Women, Peace and Security seeks to close the gender gap in leadership by mobilizing United States diplomacy and programmes, while engaging partners, investing in women's safety and rights and amplifying the voices of women leaders and organizations.

We look forward to releasing our second report on Government-wide women and peace and security implementation efforts at the end of this month and continuing to engage with civil society in that work. We encourage all States Members of the United Nations to adopt and implement action plans on women and peace and security. To that end, I congratulate the regional organizations, including those represented here today, such as the African Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, that have adopted women and peace and security strategies. Now they must be translated into action.

Regional organizations also play an essential role in encouraging countries to adopt and implement national action plans on women and peace and security. Their regional leadership in promoting women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security processes is invaluable. It is also a powerful signal for individual countries to do the same.

One area in which regional organizations can truly make a difference is in creating a safe space for women peacebuilders, journalists and civil society. We must all work together to empower those actors and prevent acts of violence against them, including through the misuse and exploitation of digital technologies for online harassment and abuse and the spread of gender disinformation by State and non-State malign actors.

The United States remains fully committed to advancing resolution 1325 (2000) as a matter of peace and security for everyone. Our responsibility is immense, but our opportunity to change lives, if we were to fully commit to the women and peace and security agenda, is even greater.

Ms. Haugsbakken (Norway): I would like to thank Albania for convening today's timely debate. Protecting women's rights and participation has certainly not become less important against the backdrop of violent takeovers and militarized responses.

I would also like to thank Secretary-General Guterres, Under-Secretary-General Bahous and the representatives of regional organizations for sharing their insights and lessons learned.

Norway sees three ways in which regional organizations can approach this subject.

First, they can lead by example. For decades, the African Union has demonstrated leadership in addressing military coups and takeovers through its quick and decisive responses. That is truly a best practice that reminds us all of the value of principled cooperation.

We also commend the creation of regional action plans on women and peace and security by organizations, such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States, and we encourage the strengthened implementation of those plans. Joint statements such as the one issued by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Afghan girls' right to education are also important political signals that should not be underestimated.

Nonetheless, the real test is in translating our general policy commitments into concrete action when conflicts arise. Regional organizations should insist on women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all mediation efforts towards local and national conflict resolution and in rebuilding from political crises. They should also insist on including women in regional organizations' own mediation teams. The Regional Women Mediator Networks has a wealth of experience and expertise that can be drawn on in that regard.

Secondly, regional organizations can partner for change. After a military coup or violent takeover, national women and peace and security commitments and the work of civil society are often also interrupted. That contributes to further marginalization of women leaders from political spaces and formal processes at both the national and the local levels.

In Afghanistan and in Myanmar, we have heard repeated calls from women peacebuilders and civil society representatives, including those in exile, for formal and informal platforms to ensure their continued and direct engagement with those who have taken power.

In the Sudan, the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan have supported the creation of a group of non-partisan women from across the country that will promote women's participation in the political process, building on the key role played by women in the 2019 revolution.

Thirdly, regional organizations can support accounting for justice. Organizations like the AU, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the European Union have long-standing commitments to promoting gender equality. As institutions, and through their members, they have numerous levers at their disposal to reduce barriers to both women's protection and participation. That includes coordinating regional approaches and joint messaging to revoke laws and policies that restrict the rights of women and girls and, equally, promoting policies tailored to protect, including against reprisals.

Regional support for investigations, information-sharing and the capacity-building of national institutions are also ways to strengthen the prevention of, and response to, sexual and gender-based violence and other human rights violations and abuses. When all else fails, the rulings of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have shown that there can also be regional tools for course correction and accountability.

Regional organizations carry the weight of many and diverse voices. They are uniquely placed to facilitate dialogue and rebuild broken relations between those in power and their populations. Their engagement in peace diplomacy is critical, and they are key actors and partners to the United Nations in translating our women and peace and security ambitions into actual impact.

The authority, advisory and convening roles of regional organizations can also be entry points for dialogue on upholding the rights of women and girls, re-enabling an environment for engagement by women human rights defenders and civil society and strengthening protection and accountability, all of which we can, and should, draw on, especially in contexts of violent takeovers.

Ms. Osei-Asare (Ghana): Since the unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), more than two decades ago, discourses and efforts geared towards the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace and security have received unprecedented international momentum and yielded positive outcomes, with significant promise for increased success if we all commit to that important global objective and keep the promises.

Ghana welcomes the emphasis of this high-level open engagement on the role of regional organizations in implementing the three main thematic tracks of the women and peace and security agenda in the face

of political turmoils, and commends the Albanian delegation, led by you, Your Excellency, for directing our collective attention towards that aspect. I also wish to express my appreciation to all the briefers for their rich perspectives, which rightly point us to the need for action on the commitments that we all made.

The African story cannot be recounted without highlighting an essential component of the continent's political and economic reality, which is the progressive quest for a deepened regional integration, marked by economic prosperity and sociopolitical cohesion. Africa's regional economic communities, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of Central African States and the East African Community, which serve as building blocks for continental integration, have had a long history of engagement with the aspirations of the people of the continent, even though the recurrence of sociopolitical conflicts has led to the erosion of some gains in several instances.

In moments of social and political unrest in several places in the world, women and peace and security agents, against the odds of severe reprisals, marginalization and outright hostility, continue to work towards the advancement, progress and stability of their communities.

It is also encouraging to observe the fervour and attention that the women and peace and security agenda has generated within regional and subregional organizations. The African Union (AU) and ECOWAS have incorporated crucial aspects of the agenda into their strategic objectives and operations. We commend, in particular, the efforts that are being made to nurture a culture of fervent national and regional implementation, backed by political will, as well as the desire to protect women and give them a voice in society.

In West Africa, for instance, in acknowledgement of the contributions of women in building peaceful and stable societies, ECOWAS has developed legal frameworks to assure the role of women in governance, electoral processes and conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding. The region is both mindful of the need to protect the rights of women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence and deeply appreciative of the role that women groups at the national and regional levels have played in the resolution of conflicts, such as those that occurred in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire in the early

2000s. In that regard, we recall the critical role that the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network played in getting women represented in the peace processes of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, as well as the roles that others play in facilitating the participation of women in political activities.

The adoption in 2010 of the ECOWAS regional action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions has also seen the inclusion of women and peace and security elements in initiatives, such as the regional early warning systems, the development of a gender and elections plan and the training of women mediators to support peace initiatives in the region. Through those initiatives, ECOWAS continues to work towards inclusive and participatory governance processes, including the rights and roles of women in peace and governance processes. Such initiatives, which have the primary intention of enabling the integration of women into the mechanisms of preventive diplomacy and mediation, deserve full support.

In addressing more specifically the focus of today's engagement, Ghana will make four points.

First, there must be a concerted effort to improve on our collective resilience against conflict by diverting some of the global military expenditure towards investment in human security. In that way, we can channel much-needed funds into women and peace and security initiatives aimed at conflict prevention.

Secondly, we must encourage cross-collaboration on the women and peace and security agenda among regional organizations. That would ensure the effective exchange of best practices across regions and deepen the partnerships to bridge knowledge gaps required to support women's empowerment initiatives.

Thirdly, we urge the Security Council to request the Secretary-General to ensure the allocation of targeted, practical and rapid resources to facilitate responses to threats against women peacebuilders or avert the dangers that they may face, especially in the context of military coups. The Council can also ensure that peace operations are adequately resourced to address the challenges encountered by United Nations entities and Member States in monitoring, reporting and providing support to women peacebuilders.

Finally, we urge that regional organizations, in collaboration with the United Nations, actively promote women's participation in mediation through training

programmes and the creation of a database of women mediators at the regional level. Organizations should also take special measures to ensure full participation by actively employing women as special envoys and senior mediators.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Ghana remains fully committed to the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes, especially in the context of conflicts, where their interventions matter most. Through our membership of the AU and ECOWAS, we will continue to contribute to building a robust regional women and peace and security framework, characterized by tangible actions leading to the attainment of desirable outcomes.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): The United Arab Emirates would like to thank Albania for organizing today's open debate and to thank you, Minister Xhaçka, for presiding over this meeting and being such a champion of the women and peace and security agenda. We continue to support increased Security Council engagement on the women and peace and security agenda. We thank Albania for being a strong partner in our shared commitments in that regard.

When conflict breaks out, it rarely affects only the groups or States directly involved. Regional organizations are closest to the situation, with a deep understanding of conflict dynamics and its spillover effects. Their role is essential throughout the conflict continuum. They are also key to addressing cross-border issues, including refugee flows and internal displacement, terrorist attacks and food insecurity — all of them, sadly, issues that we face across the globe today.

As the Council engages with regional organizations in conflict prevention and resolution, we must also amplify their critical role in implementing the women and peace and security agenda. Regional action plans are important because regional organizations publicly commit to the women and peace and security agenda and provide tangible accountability. Moreover, when they convene negotiations, facilitate peace processes and deploy observers, they can substantively increase the alarmingly low number of women negotiators — currently only 13 per cent, on average. That number is unacceptably low, but can easily be addressed. We need to focus on three main areas — strengthened networks, localized security and gender-responsive leadership.

First, we stress the need for benchmarks and targeted funding for women's organizations and networks at all levels before conflict erupts. Deepening partnerships between regional organizations and local women leaders can promote their roles in conflict resolution, preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. As of 2018, women's organizations received only 0.13 per cent of total official development assistance, despite countless appeals as to the centrality of women's participation to sustainable peace. Strong partnerships are the backbone of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and can help women and girls build greater resilience when military coups and seizures of power occur. We echo the call of UN-Women Executive Director Sima Bahous to fully utilize those networks.

Secondly, regional security frameworks should systematically include diverse local and religious nuances in order to guarantee that they are widely accepted, trusted and implemented. That means not only consistent investment in training women peacekeepers, observers and protection officers from their regions, but also the embedding of local dynamics into the design and implementation of security sector reform. Coupling specific knowledge of local conflicts with international security training can help shape comprehensive conflict resolution frameworks and respond to all groups affected by a conflict, particularly women and girls.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen gender-responsive leadership, including by appointing women to high-level positions. That should include targeted positions, where they can advocate for the women and peace and security agenda, as well as overall leadership positions, like those of the extraordinary women we heard from today in our briefings. This is an issue that the entire international community should work on. As of 2020, almost half of the world's 30 major international organizations have never been led by a woman, and in 2021 only 18 out of 194 heads of delegations at the high-level week of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session were women. If we do not achieve gender-responsive leadership, we will not succeed in institutionalizing gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda — and may as well stop paying it lip-service in the Council. Albania's numbers shared by you, Madam President, are a fantastic global benchmark to aspire to.

Although we believe these rights and truths to be universal, we must in parallel embrace local nuances and work within them. Last fall, like many gathered here, I met with a remarkable group of Afghan women. One of them, a former journalist, explained to me that one of the most powerful arguments against the ongoing assault on the rights of women and girls is the example set by Muslim-majority countries where women are free and equal agents of their lives. She gave the example of a country like my own, the United Arab Emirates, as an aspirational model. That courageous woman was speaking to the power and importance of relatability, affiliation and nuance — the very same strengths that regional organizations bring to this agenda. Properly empowered and supported, regional organizations can expand and complement international practices that may overlook contexts and identities of a conflict. Regional agents uniquely respect, reflect and represent their audience. That is invaluable for all the dimensions of this work, but perhaps nowhere more so than for the women and girls who bear the brunt of conflict worldwide. We should reflect that fact in our support to them.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this important debate, and through you I thank the valuable expert briefers and regional organizations that we heard from today.

In April, during our presidency of the Security Council, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon and Nadia Murad launched the Murad Code (see S/PV.9016) — a landmark code of conduct for safely and effectively gathering information from survivors. We ensured that the Code was translated into Ukrainian so that it could be used, now, with the aim of holding perpetrators to account for their crimes. The Secretary-General set out very clearly the many serious issues facing women in conflict areas all over the world — from Afghanistan to Ukraine to Myanmar. We need action to address this if we are to prevent the disproportionate suffering of women in those crises.

That is why we, as the United Kingdom, are particularly focused on the threat of sexual violence. In November, London will host an international conference on preventing sexual violence in conflict, the centrepiece of a global campaign launched by Foreign Secretary Truss last year. For us, all options are on the table to strengthen international prevention and response to the heinous crimes of conflict-related sexual

violence, which remain one of the many horrifying consequences of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine.

Turning to the role of regional organizations, in many contexts they have unique influence in advocating for the rights of women and girls — for example, in the case of Afghanistan and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We join others in reaffirming our support for all efforts to remove the wholly counterproductive restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women and girls.

For our part, the United Kingdom supports and funds the regional Women Mediators across the Commonwealth network, an experienced group of women who stand ready to support our collective efforts for peace at the community level. Members have resolved electoral conflicts in Uganda, mediated the political conflict in Myanmar and bridged divided communities in Northern Ireland and Cyprus.

The United Kingdom also supports regional collaboration to drive change on the ground — for example, through our work with institutions of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Member States on capacity-building. We have also supported the development of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's first policies on sexual exploitation and abuse and on conflict-related sexual violence.

Looking forward, there are further practical actions that regional organizations and Member States can take to support women's full, equal and meaningful participation.

First, as others have said, Member States can ensure that women are at the heart and forefront of organizations in leadership and decision-making roles.

Secondly, they can actively promote the agenda through communications and dialogue.

Thirdly, Member States can develop regional action plans, toolkits and strategies on women, peace and security, which are then fully implemented.

Finally, Member States can share learning experiences and expertise among organizations to strengthen the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda rather than duplicating efforts.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to welcome you, Madam Minister, as you preside over this meeting on the very relevant and important topic of women, peace and security. We thank the Secretary-General for his

assessments, and we have listened with interest to the briefings by today's briefers.

The proposed topic for discussion, namely, "Keeping the promises: The role of regional organizations in implementing the women, peace and security in the face of political turmoil and seizures of power by force", has been formulated vaguely, but in many ways, it can be projected onto the developments in Ukraine. The deterioration and disintegration of that State began in February 2014, when an anti-constitutional coup d'état was organized in Kyiv. The removal of the legitimate president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, and the seizure of power by radical nationalist forces was carried out with the very active contribution of Western States. The forces that came to power as a result of these events began to engage in the forcible Ukrainization of the country, the destruction of everything Russian, repression of political opponents and the fight against dissidents. They banned opposition parties and shut down opposition media, while at the same time and with the support of the West, presenting modern Ukraine as a model of democracy and pluralism of opinion. The authorities in Kyiv unleashed a civil war against the Donbas region, the Russian and Russian-speaking population of which refused to recognize the coup and stood up for their right to communicate in their native language and live in peace with Russia. The Kyiv regime tried to drown dissenters in blood. On 2 May 2014, at the Trade Unions House in Odesa, Ukrainian nationalists burned participants in a peaceful protest, including women, alive. On 9 May 2014, the Azov Battalion, some members of which recently surrendered at the Azovstal plant, shot at peaceful protesters in the city of Mariupol. On 17 August 2014, a Ukrainian fighter jet struck the regional administration building of Luhansk, again killing people. Then for eight years, Kyiv shelled the peaceful cities of Donbas and established a complete blockade of the region. As a result, 3,300 civilians in Donbas, including 152 children, were killed.

Ukraine has since established a regime of strict censorship. Undesirable mass media and Internet websites are being shut down. Independent journalists are persecuted, opposition parties are being banned, and local security services have detained and abducted representatives of the press and media dozens of times, including female correspondents Valentina Solovieva, Olga Yureva, Alina, Yepremyan, Evgenia Koroleva, Elizaveta Khramtsova. Natalia Kalesheva, Yelena Makarova, Ksenia Kolchina, Alexandra Tcherepnina,

Ekaterina Voronina, Maria Knyazeva, Tamara Nersesian, Anna Kurbatova and Natalia Goncharova, for carrying out their professional activities.

The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine has recorded dozens of attacks on media workers annually: 77 people attacked in 2020, 75 in 2019, and 86 people in 2018. In 2015, Olga Moroz, editor-in-chief of the *Neteshinskiy Vestnik* newspaper was killed in the Khmelnytskyi region. She had been preparing a story on illegal logging before her death. Some time ago, human rights activist and anti-fascist Elena Berezhnaya was arrested by the Ukrainian security services on absurd charges of treason. We wrote about this egregious case in a letter that was disseminated as a Security Council document (S/2022/253). Even before the start of the special military operation, in 2015, the Ukrainian Special Services repeatedly — at least twice — blocked the website of the Soldiers' Mothers Committee of Ukraine.

Today the civilian population of Donbas is being subjected to constant indiscriminate and deliberate shelling by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including with the use of artillery and ammunition supplied to Kyiv by its Western sponsors. NATO member States led by the United States, which are supplying weapons and ammunition to Ukraine, are direct accomplices in the killing and wounding of women in Donbas. A glaring example is the unprecedented shelling of Donetsk using rocket systems and artillery on 13 June. More than 350 rockets and shells, including French cluster munitions, which had allegedly been destroyed in 2016, and American weapons, were fired on a peaceful city. As a result of this barbaric and essentially terrorist act, six people died, including a child and a woman, and 33 persons were injured. The total number of Donbas residents who have been killed since the beginning of the special military operation is much higher.

The maternity hospital in Donetsk, where three newborns on the fifth floor were on oxygen, was also shelled. One child was brought down to the basement by doctors because he no longer needed oxygen. By pure chance, these children, doctors and nurses in the hospital survived. However, no condemnation of this inhumane crime was heard in the West. By contrast, Council members may recall how emotions ran high when the Ukrainian side and Western journalists tried in March to organize a provocation and spread a story about an alleged Russian attack on the maternity hospital in Mariupol. That shameful provocation was

convincingly exposed, but Western pseudo-defenders of women still recall periodically the maternity hospital in Mariupol. Will they be talking about the maternity hospital in Donetsk, which, unlike the one in Mariupol, was not turned into a gun post?

My dear Western colleagues will also not be able to exploit the topic of acts of sexual violence allegedly committed in Ukraine by Russian military personnel. Fakes and lies are all that they have — not a single fact, not a single shred of evidence. Of course, they will certainly not be able to surpass the former Ombudsman for Human Rights in Ukraine, Ms. Denisova, in their lies. Everyone was surprised by her incomprehensible focus on numerous details in her claims of sexual crimes and rapes of children in the occupied territories, which could not be confirmed by any evidence. Later on, she admitted that she had blatantly lied to the whole world in order to convince Western partners of the need to swiftly deliver weapons to Ukraine. She was an unusual ombudsman, indeed.

In the territories of Ukraine liberated from Ukrainian nationalists together with the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, work is currently under way to bring to light cases and evidence of crime committed by Ukrainian groups, including crimes of a sexual nature. They are being documented and investigated by the investigative authorities of Russia and the Donbas Republics, as well as the inter-agency commission to search for missing persons and burial sites of bodies of the dead in zones of armed conflicts in Donbas.

The Armed Forces of Ukraine continue to utilize the terrorist tactic of human shields, placing heavy equipment under the cover of civilians in urban and residential areas. Just recently, an adviser to the Office of the President of Ukraine, Mr. Polodyak, told *The New York Times* that the Ukrainian army will be using urban-warfare tactics. In other words, it will continue using people — civilians — as shields, and it will be destroying civilian infrastructure. Our armed forces are making every effort to preserve the lives of civilians and reach agreements on opening humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of civilians from combat areas. Saving the lives of civilians in Ukraine and the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic is our absolute priority.

With regard to the general women and peace and security agenda, we would like to draw attention to the importance of taking additional measures to enhance

the role of women in the socioeconomic development of States and situations of armed conflict or post-conflict settlements. It is necessary to strengthen women's economic capacity, create favourable conditions for women's entrepreneurship and expand women's access to financial and material resources, markets, modern technologies and intellectual property. Unfortunately, the topic of expanding women's participation in social and economic cooperation as an essential element of peacebuilding is unjustly glossed over by Western partners who, without any basis whatsoever, have proclaimed themselves champions in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. The most important areas for international cooperation should be overcoming poverty, women's development and expanding access to education and decent employment. The practice of applying unilateral coercive measures against States is absolutely unacceptable. It is clear that the impact of such measures falls first and foremost on the interests of women in the social and economic arenas.

The challenge that many Western States in particular face in terms of eradicating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance of women and people of African and Asian descent has not lost its relevance. The colonialist policies that they pursued for centuries are deeply rooted and have now been transformed into neo-colonialism. Such practices must be completely eradicated, and women must play a leading role in the process.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after three minutes.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): We thank you, Madam President, for convening this important meeting. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his insights and appreciate the insights provided by all of the other briefers today.

Discriminatory social and political structures have made violence against women systemic and deeply entrenched. Women have therefore always been easy targets in situations of armed conflict. More often than not, they have found themselves on the receiving end of peace and development processes.

India's political and development trajectory has navigated several complex challenges through its women-centric initiatives. From women's development to women-led development, women in India are driving India's development in general. Our governance has been transformed from being Government-led to a multi-stakeholder, inclusive governance model. As the world's largest democracy, India offers a unique template for gender-sensitive governance. More than 1.3 million elected women representatives, who constitute nearly 44 per cent of the total number of elected representatives, are leading political decision-making at the grass-roots level. All-women panchayats — village-level local elected bodies — are playing a defining role in grass-roots policymaking in India. Twenty Indian States have made provisions to reserve 50 per cent of seats for women in legislative bodies.

Our actions are driven by a deep conviction that an environment conducive to the participation and inclusion of women in political processes is indispensable for peace. A democratic polity, pluralism and the rule of law are essential prerequisites for fostering this type of enabling environment. With the aim of ensuring stability in our region, we have therefore been underlining the importance of inclusive and representative governance in Afghanistan, with the meaningful participation of women, in accordance with resolution 2593 (2021). We are particularly concerned about the discriminatory inferior status imposed on women in Afghan society, which among other things has had an adverse effect on the education of Afghan girls.

India's development processes are guided by the principle of "participation by all, prosperity for all". Several citizen-centric initiatives have been taken to ensure that women are full participants and beneficiaries in India's development story. We have leveraged digital technologies to provide greater access for women to finance, credit, technology and employment. To that end, we have opened online bank accounts for more than 445 million people, with more than 55 per cent of the account holders being women. During the coronavirus disease pandemic, that initiative helped nearly 200 million women via direct benefit transfers.

With regard to conflict situations, the United Nations, regional organizations and the international community have a special responsibility towards women. Checking impunity and stopping violence and exploitation in conflict situations are crucial. The nature of peacekeeping and peacebuilding has

changed to accommodate those imperatives. In that regard, it is important that we factor in growing concerns emanating from misuse of new and critical technologies. The Internet and social media networks have the potential to augment women's voices and increase their participation. However, extremist groups and terrorists have increasingly exploited those tools to women's detriment. They have threatened women who are active in public life, muzzled their voices, amplified discriminatory ideas and promoted violent radicalization. To counter such misuse, we require a non-discriminatory and collective effort through a whole-of-society approach.

Terrorism and violent extremism continue to be the biggest violators of human rights and persistent threats to global peace and security. Needless to say, women and girls invariably suffer disproportionately from acts of terror. Such acts deserve strong condemnation and demand the adoption of a zero-tolerance approach. The Council must focus its attention on the consequences of terrorism for the rights of women.

Women police officers and peacekeepers have played a critical role in preserving the women and peace and security agenda. Having women peacekeepers is crucial to the success of peacekeeping missions. It also improves access to civilians and other stakeholders, as well as bringing additional skill sets to peacekeeping teams. Women peacekeepers serve as powerful mentors and role models for women and girls in post-conflict settings. They inspire grit and resilience in female victims and encourage them to champion their own rights and pursue non-traditional careers. India welcomes the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy for increasing the number of women peacekeepers. We also support increasing the deployment of women protection advisers for effective monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on sexual violence in conflict.

India stands ready to engage with its partners to work towards mainstreaming the women and peace and security agenda with a view to building inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies. Just as a bird cannot fly with one wing, durable peace cannot be achieved without the active participation of the other gender. Our collective commitments and actions towards global peace must be anchored in that premise.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting on a topic as important as women and peace and security. I would also like to thank the briefers for their contributions.

Resolution 2242 (2015) recognizes the complementary role of regional organizations in the implementation of the body of Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security. In recent years, the Council has done a good job of strengthening dialogue with regional organizations by holding annual meetings that have resulted in outcome documents that recognize their relevance to women and peace and security.

Initiatives such as the African Union's regional review on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa and the 2015-2030 executive action plan for the protection of Arab women of the League of Arab States have contributed to efforts to ensure that the objectives of the women and peace and security agenda are translated into regional specific contexts. Conversely, regional practices can also help the Council in its continuous efforts to advance the agenda.

In all cases of sexual violence in conflict, we must continue to demand that all parties adopt commitments to preventing and addressing sexual violence, developing a victim- and survivor-centred approach and holding perpetrators to account. Humanitarian actors must also be able to support survivors. Not only must we recognize the problem, but we must also strengthen, wherever appropriate, the mandates of peacekeeping operations and special political missions to better respond to such violations of international humanitarian law. The presence of women peacekeepers on the ground has also proven helpful and should continue to be pursued.

On many occasions women briefers to the Council have called for more financing for women's organizations to enable them to exercise their unique potential to support women and girls. UN-Women has also reminded us that project planning and financing often neglect the specific needs of women. Underinvestment in women's empowerment hampers progress on women's rights and gender equality and leaves women less resilient in cases of conflict and seizures of power by force. Brazil will continue to take a gender-sensitive approach to international humanitarian assistance. We believe that international financing should aim at promoting gender equality as a catalyst for lasting peace, as well as focusing on financing initiatives to ensure women's long-term economic security and well-being. We can also continue to update peacekeeping mandates so that they are more explicit in their role of promoting

women's economic inclusion and empowerment, in line with resolution 2242 (2015).

We must condemn all actions that hinder the meaningful and purposeful participation of women in peace processes and in society in general. The Council must work not only to bring women to the table at peace negotiations, but also on ways to protect those invited to the table and those working on the ground from direct violence and intimidation. By protecting the women already trying to make a difference in their communities, the Council is also making it clear that without the participation of the female population, there can be no prospects for lasting peace, let alone economic development. Normalizing the participation of women in peace processes and upgrading their role is a very concrete way to implement the women and peace and security agenda.

More than 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), women are still facing the grave security and humanitarian consequences of actions decided primarily, if not exclusively, in decision-making processes in which they did not take part. Women and girls must finally be systematically and meaningfully included in the decisions that affect their daily lives and economically empowered so that they can face the dire consequences of conflicts and seizures of power that often bring violations of their rights. Brazil will continue to support inclusive democratic political processes, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, and constructive processes promoting an end to hostilities, as well as stability, national reconciliation and lasting peace.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I commend your leadership, Madam President, and I thank the Albanian presidency for taking the initiative of convening this important debate, which reminds us of the persistent shared challenge resoundingly felt within the Security Council — promoting the women and peace and security agenda in situations that hardly lend themselves to its effective implementation. It is a challenge that demands a renewed approach and calls on us to unite our efforts at the national, regional and international levels in order to expedite the fulfilment of our commitments. I thank Executive Director Bahous, Special Envoy Diop, Ambassador Ronner-Grubačić, Secretary-General Schmid and Ms. Abu Ghazaleh for their contribution to this debate.

In Beijing in 1995, the women of the world were promised that concrete action would be taken in

12 critical areas, including decision-making, violence, human rights, health and armed conflict. Those promises were reaffirmed on 31 October 2000 by the unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which was a historic milestone in the efforts to ensure that women and girls are systematically and sustainably included in peace and security processes and mechanisms. Despite progress in the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls in many parts of the world, there continue to be gaps and delays with regard to political, social and economic inclusion, and deep concerns persist in terms of equal economic opportunities and their inclusion in decision-making.

Despite the momentum of the efforts of the international community in acknowledging women as key actors in peace processes, it must be noted that almost 22 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), women and children continue to be the primary victims of States' fragility, crisis situations and upheavals. That disheartening state of affairs is exacerbated during periods of unrest in the aftermath of unconstitutional transitions of power, which embody instability and the negation of the rule of law. Special Envoy Diop underscored the breadth of the damage that coups d'état, extreme violence and other such transitions have done to the peace and security agenda in Africa. In such situations where there is a break with the constitutional order, which many countries have experienced at some point in their history, women have unfortunately often paid an extremely heavy price. Let us be clear. Women must no longer be systematically left to become the victims of violence and basic rights violations during political unrest. On the contrary, they must be enabled to participate fully in all peace and decision-making processes, especially given the well-known fact, as we have seen from experience, that women's participation at all stages of conflict prevention and resolution processes contributes to a more sustainable peace.

Through the African Union, Africa has taken the appropriate measures and shouldered its responsibilities in addressing the issue of the seizure of power by force in its adoption of a bold legal instrument, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. The most recent Extraordinary Summit of the African Union, held in Malabo, devoted its agenda to the issue, as we are concerned about the resurgence of the problem and its impact on regional governance.

Today in some conflict-ridden regions of the world, women of all ages are showing that they have a critical role to play in conflict prevention and the promotion of lasting peace. However, in formal negotiations and transitional processes, those heroic peacemakers are often sidelined. What they have to say is not given its due, and their contributions are undervalued. Executive Director Bahous laid out several regional response plans regarding women's resilience in situations of unrest, including in Afghanistan, the Sahel and the Great Lakes region. This stark reality is a sufficient reminder of what we expect from the international community in terms of action to strengthen the leadership roles, participation and inclusion of women in all peace and decision-making processes.

Under the leadership of President Ali Bongo Ondimba, Gabon, which is one of the few African countries that have never undergone an unconstitutional change of power, is pursuing a policy that places women at the heart of shaping its society's destiny. Women are the major assets of the stability that results from lasting peace, which accounts for the allure of Gabon. Based on our experience, it is obvious that acknowledging the key role that women play in peace activities is a catalyst not only for their empowerment but for invigorating our socioeconomic and political landscapes, while ensuring women's facility in the area of the peaceful settlement of potential disputes.

Gabon remains consistent in its international advocacy for women's inclusion, participation and resilience-building in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, while recognizing the leading role that women are called on to play at every level of peace processes, regardless of their sociopolitical backgrounds, from conflict prevention to post-conflict recovery, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

My country is once again pleased to see that the African Union has fully recognized its role as a regional matrix for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, as evidenced by the increased actions of the African Union Commission aimed at promoting women's participation in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution.

In that regard, the joint efforts of the African Union Commission and the United Nations, through UN-Women and the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the African Union, led to the establishment of a network of African women leaders, whose role was recognized in resolution 2457 (2019).

It is important that those valuable initiatives, which include networks of women peacebuilding leaders, receive financial, logistical and technical support that is stable and predictable, as well as regular capacity-building support.

We call for increased national, regional and global efforts for the inclusive and efficient implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). That will inevitably require strengthening the partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly in terms of coordinating their actions on the women and peace and security agenda.

In conclusion, it is up to us as members of the Security Council, regardless of the sociopolitical situation, to promote, through regional and subregional organizations, the strengthening of resilience, leadership and participation of women in peace- and decision-making processes, not only to keep our promises and respect our commitments but also, above all, to provide an effective, comprehensive and inclusive response to the challenges facing international peace and security today.

Mrs. Gasri (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Albania for convening today's debate. Your commitment, Madam President, to upholding women's rights in the Security Council is remarkable.

It has been recalled by all speakers that conflicts, coups d'état and political unrest cause serious setbacks for women and girls. In those situations, women's voices are silenced and their rights are reduced.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban continues to drive half of their population into obscurity. In Ukraine, women are suffering the consequences of the Russian army's aggression. Many women human rights defenders and peacebuilders around the world are being attacked and threatened, including women who have spoken before the Security Council.

The Council has set up a robust framework to address that, which is in no way reversible. The Council must step up its efforts to specifically implement the women and peace and security framework in the situations on its agenda, from the Sahel to the Middle East and from the Great Lakes region to Haiti and Myanmar.

Regional organizations have a decisive role to play in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. France welcomes the strategies and action plans that have been adopted. We welcome the

establishment by the African Union of the Pan-African Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation in the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

We also commend the efforts of organizations not represented today, such as the International Organization of La Francophonie, and the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States, which the Ghanaian Minister discussed in detail.

France supports partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations and among regional organizations themselves, in particular the partnership between the European Union and the African Union for women's inclusion in peace negotiations. We call on all regional organizations to step up such initiatives and share their good practices.

We must also strengthen synergies with civil society. In that regard, we recall the innovative framework of the Generation Equality Forum, which was organized with UN-Women and Mexico in 2021. The Forum mobilized \$40 billion in funding to support a global plan to accelerate progress towards equality. We call on all Member States to join the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action and to adopt national action plans in that regard.

For its part, France will continue to promote an ambitious and determined feminist diplomacy. It will continue to place women's full participation and inclusion at the heart of its cooperation projects. France will make the implementation of its third national action plan a priority.

Finally, following the example of our Albanian presidency, France is pleased to announce today its endorsement of the shared commitment of the presidency of the Security Council to the women and peace and security agenda.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate. It is one that, as you know, is very important to Ireland.

As many speakers this morning recognized, this is a very apposite debate. The world is experiencing an unprecedented proliferation of conflicts. Alongside a global pandemic, we know that we are seeing an epidemic of coup d'états, seizures of power and territory, and indeed outright disregard for human rights and the rule of law.

In some cases, gains made for women in peace and security matters have been slipping away — we need only to look at Afghanistan. To echo the statement made by the Secretary-General earlier today, in many cases we are going in the opposite direction. As he said, we are going backwards.

We have faced such times of crisis before, and we know too well that disregarding gender and women results only in certainly ephemeral and often illusory peace and stability.

The international community has the responsibility to work for the prioritization of the women and peace and security agenda, not to oversee its marginalization. We bear that responsibility in this Chamber.

Today we had the honour of hearing from UN-Women Executive Director Sima Bahous and our briefers from the African Union, the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the League of Arab States.

I will not repeat the shameful figures about the shortfalls in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, or dwell on the yawning chasm of financial support and resources dedicated to women's organizations worldwide. They are the shameful facts. The Security Council knows that grand statements, commitments and resolutions are far from being matched by results on the ground.

Women, in all their diversity, continue to be sidelined, tokenized and, frankly, too often completely forgotten about at the negotiating table. Often, women are not even in the room, let alone heard. We are making the same mistake over and over again.

To echo the statement made by the Executive Director of UN-Women this morning, we are not living up to our commitments. Horrific conflict-related sexual violence continues to be waged as a weapon of war, something that we were starkly and graphically reminded of at last week's briefing on Ukraine (see S/PV.9056).

What I would like to focus our statement on today is how we can change the trajectory and harness the collaborative nature of regional organizations in order to advance the urgent and long-overdue delivery of our precious women and peace and security agenda. How can we ensure that women's participation and the inclusion of their voices become standard practice rather than an afterthought? That is a minimum — a baseline — as far as we are concerned.

There are more than 11 regional organizations with action plans or dedicated strategies on women and peace and security. A twelfth is on the way in the Regional Plan of Action on Women and Peace and Security of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Ireland would like to commend ASEAN for its prioritization of that work, coming as it does at a critical time in the context of the deteriorating situation in Myanmar. We know women need our urgent support. Such action plans are invaluable; but putting them into practice and ensuring the necessary spending is essential to reaping the results.

As a member of the European Union, Ireland is working to advance the EU Action Plan on Women and Peace and Security and the third Gender Action Plan. Ireland knows the benefits of working collaboratively, including in our efforts through the EU Informal Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, which enables us to share experiences and support one another in furthering this critical agenda.

The African Union's leadership in advancing the women and peace and security agenda, including through the role of the Special Envoy, is highly commendable. Ireland directly supports the vital work being done by the African Union, the Office of Special Envoy Bineta Diop and the African Women Leaders Network. We salute their work. The African Union's Continental Results Framework should also be recognized. It is an example not just of good practice but of a unique women and peace and security framework. Ireland promotes the regional acceleration of resolution 1325 (2000) to support and learn from women and peace and security initiatives across regional groups and organizations. Sadly, as we watch hard-fought gains on peace being diminished by tyrannical and patriarchal forces, we are deeply concerned about the rollback of this agenda. Nowhere is that more evident than in the abominable Taliban edicts in Afghanistan, which, as the Secretary-General said, have put nearly 20 million Afghan women and girls in a situation of being silenced and erased from sight, which is simply unacceptable.

As we see violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, proliferate in other contexts, such as Mali, Myanmar and Ukraine, we know that women and girls are often targeted and that they suffer disproportionately from the effects of war. As co-Chair with Mexico of the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, we have worked hard over the past 18 months to ensure that the women and peace and

security agenda remains at the forefront of the minds of the members of the Council, as we collectively try to work towards peace and security. Enhanced regional cooperation is one of many tools that we should wield to stop the rollback on these issues. In order to halt what the Executive Director of UN-Women described earlier today as backsliding and to advance the agenda, Ireland has a number of recommendations.

First, in addition to adopting specific regional action plans on women and peace and security, we need to ensure that all of the peace and security initiatives deployed by regional organizations are actually gender-responsive. That means action, not rhetoric. More important, we must support their implementation. Put simply, we must deliver on them concretely, day by day. Regional organizations are also well positioned to engage with troop-contributing countries to promote the inclusion of women peacekeepers in United Nations missions. That is a critical step as far as Ireland is concerned.

Secondly, we must think beyond our tired old silos. The Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact that emerged from the Generation Equality Forum has a wealth of knowledge for its members, and we commend the African Union for joining it. We encourage regional organizations to be creative and even risk being innovative in advancing the women and peace and security agenda in this way. In the Security Council, Ireland, together with Kenya and Mexico, kick-started a set of women and peace and security commitments during our presidencies. They include striving to ensure women's participation and civil-society representation in our Security Council discussions. Having women in the Chamber and at this table matters. How can we bring such commitments to the regional level and ensure that they become the norm?

Thirdly, regional organizations often have unique access to emerging conflicts in their neighbourhood. We need to use that to respond rapidly, react in a robust way and immediately take gender-responsive approaches, not as an afterthought to be applied post facto. We applaud regional organizations for standing up against atrocities happening in their regions and urge those that have been silent so far to find their voice.

Ireland is deeply aware of the benefits of international and regional cooperation. We ourselves are beneficiaries. Before our accession to the United Nations in 1955 and to the European Union in 1973, we were a nation still regaining its voice after centuries

of colonization. In the almost 50 years of our EU membership, we have come through conflict on the island of Ireland, in which women had to fight for their right to have a say in peace and in shaping our collective future. We know from first-hand experience that without the participation of women, we simply would not have gained the peace and prosperity we enjoy in Ireland today. However, that was not simply a national or bilateral effort. We are grateful for the support and the instrumental role played by our European and international partners in the peace process, both then and now. We thank the women who pressed forward to be in the room and at the table, where and when it mattered. We know the importance of such collaboration in delivering inclusive peace, and we wish it for others. There is an Irish proverb that says we live in each other's shelter. Let us step up to that aspiration.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank you, Madam, for presiding over today's meeting. I am grateful to Secretary-General Guterres for his remarks and to Executive Director Bahous and the other briefers for their briefings.

China has always been a supporter, advocate for and practitioner in the international cause of women, and has always actively supported the United Nations and regional organizations in strengthening cooperation on the women and peace and security agenda. In connection with the theme of today's meeting, I would like to share the following three points.

First, the advancement of the cause of women is inextricably linked to a stable political environment. Since last year, a number of countries, from Asia to Africa, have experienced changes in the political scene — some as part of a chain reaction triggered by the hasty withdrawal of foreign troops and others resulting from an outbreak of conflict caused by ill-suited foreign governance models. While of course we must remain concerned about the erosion of women's rights and interests and the rollback of gender equality, among other things, the international community must realize that giving support to countries that are exploring a development path that suits their national conditions is the only way they can maintain political stability. It is imperative to respect the sovereignty and leadership of all countries and to oppose external interference and the imposition of external solutions.

We must encourage regional programmes that are based on regional contexts, support the

African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Economic Community of West African States and other organizations in fully leveraging their roles and provide constructive assistance to encourage political transition and dialogue in those countries. We must support local women and local women's organizations in participating in peace processes, taking into account their specific conditions. We must ensure that women are represented and that their voices are heard in peace negotiations and political arrangements.

Secondly, achieving peace is the best protection for women. The victims who bear the brunt of armed conflict are members of vulnerable groups such as women. Efforts to deal with such situations must not end with crisis response and humanitarian assistance. The international community must remain focused on the path to political settlement, work to eliminate the root causes of conflicts and step up efforts to promote peace.

The killing of the Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh has once again highlighted the long-standing plight of Palestinian women. In the final analysis, if we are to prevent such incidents from happening again, we must implement a two-State solution and restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. China appreciates the just stance of the League of Arab States and its member States on the Palestinian question. The international community should work with the League in coordinating efforts to bring about peace based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and other international agreements and advance the Middle East peace process with a greater sense of urgency.

Amid the fighting in Ukraine, the plight of women and children has caused widespread concern. We encourage the European Union (EU) to play its role and create the conditions for direct talks between the parties to restore peace. We support the United Nations in coordinating efforts with the EU and other countries in the region to ensure the safety of the lives and property of Ukrainian citizens, including women and children, meet their basic humanitarian needs and effectively crack down on human trafficking and the sexual exploitation and abuse of refugee women and children.

Thirdly, the primary goal of the women and peace and security agenda is the comprehensive advancement of women. The challenges facing women's advancement

have been mounting, given the coronavirus disease pandemic and geopolitical conflicts that are compounded by persistent global food, energy and financial crises. The United Nations and regional organizations should prioritize development, make greater efforts to address poverty, underdevelopment and other issues that affect women, help more women escape poverty and hunger and achieve economic autonomy, and create favourable conditions for their effective participation in peace processes.

Women in regions such as the Horn of Africa and the Sahel continue to face an increasing risk of food insecurity. The international community should speed up the provision of emergency food aid and targeted assistance. Developed countries should honour their commitment to dedicating 0.7 per cent of national income to official development assistance. Tens of millions of Afghan women are also facing the challenges of hunger and poverty. Regional initiatives such as the coordination and cooperation mechanism among neighbours of Afghanistan are taking active steps to help Afghanistan improve its humanitarian situation and stabilize its economy. The countries involved in the economic blockade and unilateral sanctions against Afghanistan should end them immediately and return frozen Afghan assets to the Afghan people as soon as possible, in full and without conditions.

In March, the Security Council issued presidential statement S/PRST/2022/1, on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States, calling for the promotion of women's economic empowerment and poverty reduction in the Arab region. United Nations development agencies should increase the resources available to provide stronger support for Arab countries in accelerating their development and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, related to women.

Mrs. Toroitich (Kenya): Kenya commends Albania's efforts to advance the shared commitments of the women and peace and security agenda. I thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the representatives of regional organizations for their insights and recommendations on this important topic.

We welcome the linkage between the implementation of the Council's normative framework on women and peace and security with regional and subregional commitments and instruments, including those of the Africa Union (AU). They form part of our

implementation framework, alongside gender strategies, gender policy frameworks and regional action plans such as those spearheaded by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the East Africa Community. Kenya commends the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative, his Call to Action and the partnership between UN-Women, the Department of Peace Operations and the Peacebuilding Commission. Within the women and peace and security agenda, they all prioritize the need to enhance collaboration and planning between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

We note that in general there is still much work to be done to overcome the challenges of aligning institutional bureaucracies with partnerships with regional organizations. However, when those efforts combine with political will, they can contribute to mainstreaming gender perspectives in multidimensional peacebuilding efforts and peace support operations. That is evident in the expansion of the political space for women in the Central African Republic, the inclusion of women in mandate implementation and key political processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and women's representation in decision-making and governance in the joint efforts between the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, the AU and IGAD to support the transitional Government of South Sudan in implementing the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

It is notable that Africa is a global leader in the development of national action plans on women and peace and security. In particular, gender mainstreaming is a key element of Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the Silencing the Guns initiative and the joint United Nations-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. Kenya continues to report on its women and peace and security national implementation plan through the AU's Continental Results Framework on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa. Acknowledging the presence here today of Special Envoy Diop, my delegation reiterates Kenya's call on the Council to support the outcomes and resultant communiqué of the African Union Peace and Security Council ministerial-level meeting held on 22 March last year under Kenya's chairmanship on the theme of "Women, Peace, Culture and Gender Inclusivity in Africa". The communiqué emphasized the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach

to the four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda — prevention, protection, participation and recovery and relief. It also noted that the full and effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda should take into consideration the unique contexts of countries in armed conflict and those emerging from it. In that regard, I would like to highlight two points.

First, partnerships with regional and subregional organizations imply meaningful partnerships with regional women's networks, which play a key role in contextualizing solutions, broadening action points and identifying informed and practical implementation opportunities for the women and peace and security agenda, based on proximity. That is particularly crucial in fragility and conflict situations, where peace must be planted more deeply and sustained from the grassroots.

The Council should therefore leverage the comparative advantage of the AU Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation — FemWise-Africa, the African Women Leaders Network and related women's networks and women's rights organizations. Their inclusion will enhance mapping, prevention and response strategies and advance women's empowerment, participation and leadership in Africa, including in peace and political processes. We also encourage the Council to continue supporting the translation of the objectives of the Photoville exhibition "In Their Hands: Women Taking Ownership of Peace", launched during Kenya's presidency of the Council in October last year. The stories of women peacebuilders, mediators, peace signatories and parliamentarians from various countries, including the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, South Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen and Colombia, revealed the benefit of having functional and well-resourced regional women's networks to anchor their work.

Secondly, crafting practical and sustainable regional partnerships means early investment in participation and protection. In that regard, we recognize that coups d'état and military takeovers further compound the challenge of protecting women peacebuilders, journalists, civil-society representatives and activists. There is therefore a need for sustained and early investment in women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping through regional networks, before such conflicts arise. It is important to ensure that regional women's networks have sufficient financial and human resources, which should trickle down to national

capacity-building, research and data analysis, training in mediation, negotiations and advocacy.

In conclusion, it is also important to set up justice and accountability infrastructure that can provide legal, medical and psychological care to survivors of reprisals and sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings.

Mr. De La Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania and thank her delegation for convening today's debate. I also thank the briefers for their briefings this morning, with all protocols observed.

My country, whose foreign policy is feminist, accords high priority to the women and peace and security agenda, including its implementation with a comprehensive approach, particularly on the ground, just where the role of regional organizations is fundamental in closing the gap between rhetoric and reality.

The framework that we have been able to build for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in sustainable peacebuilding since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) is complemented by the role of regional and subregional organizations in conflict-affected countries. Such organizations have been crucial in promoting political dialogue by having first-hand knowledge of local actors, as well as in advancing respect for human rights, including gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Mexico is convinced that, in times of political turmoil and in contexts of takeovers by force, the involvement of regional organizations is even more important, particularly if they work hand in hand with women leaders, peacebuilders and human rights defenders, while prioritizing their substantive participation to achieve the re-establishment of constitutional order.

We have seen the speed with which the human rights situation of women in various parts of the world has deteriorated. Sexual and gender-based violence is exacerbated when there is a breakdown of constitutional order. We believe the following points to be appropriate.

First, action plans on women and peace and security need to be updated, with the participation of women's organizations, in all their diversity, and local feminist movements, ensuring sufficient flexibility to adapt them to each context and channelling adequate

resources to support women human rights defenders, who contribute to a stable community environment.

Secondly, capacities should also be strengthened to provide assistance in political electoral processes, including promoting women's full, equal and meaningful participation in public life and decision-making processes at all levels, ensuring their participation as candidates and voters and supporting national early-warning and accountability mechanisms for sexual and gender-based violence.

Thirdly, there should be collaboration, in coordination with the Secretary-General's mediators and special envoys, across peace operations and civil society, including victims and survivors of sexual violence, to ensure that peace agreements include specific provisions on care and redress for sexual violence.

Fourthly, women's leadership skills need to be promoted through digital technologies, particularly among young women and traditionally excluded groups, such as indigenous, Afro-descendant, refugee, disabled and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, in key areas, such as mediation and conflict prevention and resolution.

Fifthly, the exchange of good practices among regional and subregional organizations in relation to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda should be further promoted — and we have been trying to promote that in partnership with Ireland — with a special focus on capacity-building for the collection of relevant disaggregated data, gender analysis and the building of synergies with other actors in order to foster knowledge and multidimensional research on conflicts using a gender perspective.

Sixthly and lastly, it is necessary to promote the establishment, or strengthening, of inclusive networks of women mediators in the various subregions, ensuring the representation of women from diverse backgrounds and specializations, for example, human rights, humanitarian affairs, communications, advocacy and negotiation, and to encourage mentoring schemes for younger women.

On that last point, we acknowledge the work of the various networks of women mediators that already exist in different regions, and we are pleased to briefly report that Mexico is working with other countries in the Latin American region to establish a network of women mediators, which will seek to increase the

number of women involved in conflict prevention and mediation, as well as in peace processes within and outside the region.

In conclusion, we kindly request UN-Women to strengthen the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, emanating from the Equality Generation Forum, as a platform for the implementation of the activities described above, given its diverse and multiple membership, which includes numerous regional organizations, as well as networks of women mediators and civil society organizations.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after three minutes.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Finland.

Mr. Skinnari (Finland): I thank Albania for organizing this very timely meeting. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Despite the significant progress made in advancing the women and peace and security agenda, there continues to be a huge gap between what has been achieved on paper and on the ground. In Ukraine, we see mass displacement, the indiscriminate killing of civilians, attacks on civilian infrastructure and shocking reports of sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking. The ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, the Sudan, Myanmar and Mali, to name only a few places, threaten the fragile gains of the women and peace and security agenda and the lives and work of women peacebuilders. We need to drastically accelerate our efforts to bridge the widening gap. The role of national Governments and regional and subregional organizations will be crucial in that regard.

We warmly welcome the participation of regional and subregional organizations in this open debate and call for a continued, regular exchange of views and better coordination between our actions.

In the context of military coups and takeovers, regional and subregional organizations are often instrumental in developing context-specific and tailor-made approaches. They are often the first to

react in crisis response and to engage with the parties concerned to ensure the protection of civilians. They are uniquely placed to build trust and promote dialogue among the parties concerned, as well as offer support in mediation and reconciliation. They can be influential in advocating for women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in all aspects of peace and security.

The work of regional women and peace and security special envoys should be adequately supported, and women and peace and security experts need to be systematically and firmly involved on all levels and stages of planning and leadership of United Nations missions.

We all need to further step up our interaction with civil society and our support for local women's organizations and women peacebuilders. Their contextual, local expertise is crucial for our success. The Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network provides an important platform for interaction and sharing of best practices. Investing in better, coordinated data collection, gender analysis and systematic monitoring of results across all peace efforts is key to enabling a radical shift on women's meaningful participation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Ms. Shoman Khot (Jordan): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I wish you every success in your presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to thank the all-women briefers, change-makers and women-empowerment advocates for their invaluable input.

Today's meeting is about keeping the promises and pledges we made 22 years ago when Member States committed to enhancing the full, active and meaningful inclusion of women in processes to prevent, mitigate, resolve and recover from conflict or disaster. Nine resolutions later, we have adopted policies and taken ambitious strides towards the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda — and yet, we are still facing challenges in realizing our goals.

Jordan, committed to advancing the women and peace and security agenda, is in the process of drafting its second national action plan aimed at promoting coordinated and holistic efforts to integrate women and their perspectives in matters of peace and security. As host to a large number of Palestinian and Syrian

refugees, we have also included the most vulnerable in our action plan.

A critical tool in advancing national responses, Jordan's national action plan has strengthened prevention and protection mechanisms, which have provided prevention and protection services on gender-based violence to more than 12,000 vulnerable women and girls. Despite the exceptional circumstances due to the coronavirus disease pandemic, significant progress has been achieved in the implementation of our national action plan.

We are building on lessons learned, knowledge acquired and challenges and opportunities that have emerged from Jordan's first national action plan, with the aim of setting new goals to increase the full, active and meaningful participation of women in public life and increase support to Jordan's peace and security efforts through a gender-responsive approach.

Supporting civil society organizations, women human rights defenders and, especially, women's organizations operating in conflict regions is pivotal. They are armed with extensive knowledge and the expertise needed to build sustainable peace. They also play a central role in conflict prevention, including in early warning, and in forging peace processes.

It is not enough to strengthen bilateral relationships with regional partners; collective regional efforts with international partners to reinforce the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda are needed. A shared vision that respects the characteristics of each State and ensures a flexible and sustained flow of funding is crucial to arriving at optimal results.

We are proud to be part of the Regional Action Plan of the League of Arab States for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The Plan accelerates the efforts of Arab States to advance the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

In conclusion, empowerment is contagious. Hope exists in the spaciousness of uncertainty. And the Middle East is a region with a youthful population determined to drive the wheel of positive change. Lift up one woman, teach another girl, and the reverse domino effect is activated.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Oehri (Liechtenstein): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on an agenda

that is particularly dear to us and that has had immense impact on the ground since its inception more than two decades ago. In many parts of the world, women have been key agents of political change and contributed to sustainable peace as peacekeepers, mediators, lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders, among other roles. Yet their full, equal and meaningful participation remains the exception rather than the rule. All too often, women and girls continue to face threats, attacks and retaliation when standing up for peace, democracy and the rule of law — from Belarus to Afghanistan and elsewhere. Protecting women's rights goes hand in hand with enabling them to be agents of change themselves, including by eliminating patriarchal systems and harmful gender stereotypes.

The situation of women and girls in Myanmar remains of grave concern, especially since the military coup of 2021, with increased risks of trafficking, child marriage and sexual violence, as the Special Envoy reported to the General Assembly earlier this week. In its resolution 75/287, the General Assembly condemned the use of lethal force and violence by the armed forces of Myanmar and called for the prevention of the flow of arms into Myanmar. We urge all Member States to implement its provisions as a matter of priority, and the Security Council to take complementary action in support of the call from the General Assembly. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations also plays a critical role in efforts towards a peaceful future for Myanmar and stability in the region, including through its five-point consensus adopted last year.

The aggression against Ukraine and the systematic violations of international humanitarian law by the Russian armed forces, including the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, are causing immense suffering. Millions of women and children fleeing from Ukraine are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking. We support the focus of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in that respect and welcome its practical recommendations to prevent the current humanitarian crisis from turning into a human-trafficking crisis. An effective response to human trafficking must also include private- and financial-sector actors, as called for in resolution 2331 (2016). The Liechtenstein Finance against Slavery and Trafficking initiative, or FAST for short, has undertaken activities with respect to the risk of these crimes as a result of the massive refugee flows from Ukraine, both in the area of prevention and financial inclusion.

In conclusion, we remain concerned about the high occurrence of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, men and boys, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons, as documented by the All Survivors Project in Afghanistan and Syria, among other situations. International criminal justice mechanisms have significantly advanced our efforts to fight impunity, including through groundbreaking verdicts by the International Criminal Court. The pioneering role of the Rome Statute, with its gender-sensitive approach, can serve as a source of inspiration for national and regional courts, as well as special tribunals. Next month we will be celebrating the twentieth anniversary of its entry into force.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rae (Canada): I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, an informal network of 66 Member States, representing all five regional groups of the United Nations and the European Union. I want to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your country, Albania, on convening this important debate.

I want to emphasize three points.

First, we must continue to take swift and concerted action to fully implement resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. Otherwise, we will find ourselves in a situation where women and girls, in very diverse situations and conditions, will continue to be sidelined from political and peace processes, live in fear for their safety, face reprisals for raising their voices and be subjected to violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. While Member States are expected to implement women and peace and security resolutions, I want to emphasize the role that regional and subregional organizations play. In conflicts and crises, including in contexts of seizures of power by force, regional organizations and

networks provide much support in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution. We urge them to promote women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects and at all levels of peace and security processes.

Secondly, we are encouraged that we are actually making quite a lot of progress, and we commend initiatives already taken to strengthen collaboration, including with the United Nations, in order to improve data disaggregation and gender analysis, share best practices and coordinate gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches so as to ensure the meaningful inclusion of women, in particular those from traditionally marginalized groups. We believe that the Peacebuilding Commission's advisory and convening role can also play an important role in supporting those efforts.

Finally, it is critical that regional partners support safe and enabling environments for women peacebuilders, human rights defenders, activists and gender equality advocates. We call on partners to join us in providing rapid, flexible funding to women and women-led organizations at the front lines of peace and security.

I want to say briefly, in my national capacity, that in Ukraine and Myanmar — as has been stated by others, including the representatives of Ireland and Liechtenstein today — we cannot deny the fact that there is evidence that gender-based violence is being used as a deliberate weapon of war. That is not only disturbing, but it sets us back — not just a few years but, frankly, centuries.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting.

Given the lateness of the hour, with the concurrence of the members of the Security Council, I intend to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.