



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9158th meeting

Thursday, 20 October 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Biang	(Gabon)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Fino
	Brazil	Mrs. Espeschit Maia
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Ghana	Ms. Opong-Ntiri
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Mr. Mythen
	Kenya	Ms. Nthoki
	Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups

Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2022/740)

Letter dated 4 October 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/743)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups

Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2022/740)

Letter dated 4 October 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/743)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Central African Republic, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Niger, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye, Ukraine, Viet Nam and Yemen 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; Ms. Bineta Diop, Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission; and Ms. Zahra Nader, Editor-in-Chief, *Zan Times*.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; Ms. Irene Fellin, NATO Secretary-General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security; and Ms. Alexandra Boivin, Head of Policy and Humanitarian Diplomacy Division, International Committee of the Red Cross, to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

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/2022/740, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security, and document S/2022/743, which contains the text of a letter dated 4 October 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

I would like to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ms. Amina Mohammed, to whom I now give the floor.

The Deputy Secretary-General: Let me begin by responding to some remarks that I was not wearing pink. The bright part of the dress that I am wearing represents the hope that I have for women's rights in our world today. But this black veil in which I am shrouded is a sign of mourning for the women who have been lost to gender-based violence, the war in Ukraine and the incredibly tragic climate events we have seen over the past few years.

I thank Gabon for organizing this important debate on strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups. We cannot separate the perilous state of peace in our world from the destructive effects of patriarchy and the silencing of women's voices. The challenges we face today, from proliferating conflicts to worsening assaults on human rights, are in many ways connected to the trampling of women's rights and to deeply ingrained misogyny around the world. We must call out such misogyny as it manifests itself in the abuse and discrimination that women confront on the street, at home, at work and online, day in and day out. But we must also challenge the social, political and economic structures and norms that sustain it. We must stand firm against armed groups that use violence as a weapon of war and misogyny as part of their propaganda, recruitment and fundraising tactics. Women and girls are often the primary targets of violence and abuse in conflict settings, and they must be at the vanguard of our responses.

Study after study has demonstrated that when we strengthen women's resilience and leadership, everyone benefits, including our boys and men. Women are more likely to foster inclusive modes of governance and coexistence, build peace and silence the guns and invest in sustainable development — a cornerstone of peace, prosperous communities and societies. The participation of women at all levels, from local communities to national parliaments, has played a pivotal role in changing the way we approach peace and security over the past 20 years. But progress has been far too slow. Between 1995 and 2019, the percentage of peace agreements with gender-equality provisions increased from 14 to 22 per cent. Four peace agreements out of five still ignore gender equality, and a disconnect continues at decision-making levels. Around the same time period, women constituted on average just 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators and 6 per cent of signatories to major peace processes. That is unacceptable. Seven of every 10 peace processes included no women mediators or signatories. Women's participation in peace processes, and their influence over decisions that affect their lives, continues to lag very far behind, creating a real barrier to inclusive, durable and sustainable peace. We must do better, and we must do it now. That will mean dismantling patriarchal norms that exclude women from power; putting forward more women mediators and negotiators; establishing more regular and formal exchanges with women mediators to continually improve our approach; and securing greater and more predictable financing. Today women peacebuilders mediate disputes, defuse tensions and save lives in the hardest-to-reach places. Yet their front-line work remains consistently underfunded.

The Secretary-General has identified five transformative actions for the decade ahead on women's rights. I urge everyone to implement them without delay. He has urged for special attention to be paid to protecting women human rights defenders, who face rising threats, reprisals and violence. Those brave women are at the vanguard of the women and peace and security agenda. For its part, the United Nations is acting to protect women leaders and human rights activists around the world.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has publicly condemned violence against women human rights defenders, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, detention and torture. The Mission is engaging with the de facto authorities to advocate for the protection of human

rights for all Afghans, regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity. Our Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which has already supported more than 600 local women's organizations in crisis settings, has opened a special window to support women activists who are at risk. Across the world, we are pushing for women's meaningful representation and participation in peacemaking efforts, with some success.

The strategy of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan for a gender-responsive process included a 40 per cent target of women in delegations to the peace talks. This year, the Mission facilitated the formation of a women's rights group that will participate in the next phase of political talks. Our political and peacekeeping missions promote women's participation in elections in conflict-affected countries, including by protecting women candidates from violence. In the Central African Republic, a female candidate for Parliament alerted us that she was under threat. Peacekeepers arrived swiftly, and the armed actors left. Today that former candidate is a member of Parliament. In Mali, years of coordinated advocacy by women's organizations, the United Nations and the Security Council have contributed to significantly increasing the share of women in the Executive Monitoring Committee of the Political Agreement from three to 38 per cent. In that regard, we would like to commend the African Union on its efforts for women, peace and security. We must build on those examples, and we count on Council members to do the same, using their influence to move the women and peace and security agenda forward.

The women and peace and security agenda is not just an answer to historic wrongs and marginalization, but an opportunity to do things differently — in a very difficult world. When we open the door to inclusion and participation, we take a giant step forward in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Yet, despite decades of evidence that gender equality offers a path to sustainable peace and conflict prevention, we are moving in the opposite direction. We need full gender parity, including through special quotas to accelerate the inclusion of women across election monitoring, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and justice systems.

At this time of peril, conflicts and crises, we must pursue proven strategies for peace and stability. Protecting women's rights and promoting women's inclusion is such a strategy. Today let us recommit

to putting women's participation at the centre of everything we do, everywhere.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Bahous.

Ms. Bahous: At the outset, allow me to thank Gabon for organizing today's open debate.

It is an honour for me to be here this morning. This is a vitally important time for the women and peace and security agenda. A reversal of generational gains in women's rights is taking place amid surging threats to security. Violent conflict, displacement, the repercussions of the global pandemic and the growing climate emergency all exact the highest price from women and girls.

The Deputy Secretary-General has already made clear the linkages among the challenges we face. The retreat from and pushback against the rights of women and girls aggravates those challenges, while depriving us of the most powerful solutions. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/740) describes how the women and peace and security agenda has been driven back. It details crucial and specific implementation gaps that demand our collective and urgent attention. I urge everyone with a part to play in the pursuit of peace and security to read the report in full.

I will focus on three cross-cutting areas highlighted by the report, for which I will have three corresponding asks for everyone. To be clear from the outset, those asks are to protect and support women human rights defenders as a powerful force for peace; guarantee a seat at the table for women when peace is made; and ensure that what we say about the priorities of women and peace and security is reflected in what we fund. We are a long way from where we should be on all three of those asks.

I will begin with the subject of women human rights defenders, whose courage and commitment embody the ideals of the Security Council. Around the world — from Iran to Tigray, Ukraine, Afghanistan and beyond — women human rights defenders risk their lives every day in the name of peace and human rights and for the sake of their communities and our planet. They should be cherished by everyone, but instead they are increasingly under attack. Tragically, there are numerous examples of that.

Daniela Soto, an indigenous woman human rights defender from Colombia, has been advocating for human rights since she was a teenager. In May 2021, she was shot twice in her abdomen by armed civilians. She survived the attack and spoke here at the Security Council five months later (see S/PV.8879), bringing attention to the continuing killings of indigenous women leaders in Colombia.

Siti Alnfor Ahmed Bakr, a 24-year-old nurse and activist in the Sudan, was killed by security forces in November last year when she participated in a peaceful demonstration in Bahry.

We will soon hear from Ms. Zahra Nader, who will share with us the enormous risks taken and price paid by women human rights defenders in Afghanistan, who continue to demonstrate for their human rights in the face of the Taliban's policies of systematic repression of women and girls — and for that they are harassed, detained and tortured.

Each one of those incidents is appalling in its own right, but together they also reflect a bigger picture. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recently reported that 60 per cent of the nearly 350 individual cases of intimidation or reprisals following cooperation with the United Nations in the past year concerned women. Surveys conducted by UN-Women show us that nearly one third of the women representatives of civil society who have briefed the Council have also faced reprisals. The fact that briefing the Council is cause for such reprisals should surely shock and compel us to take action.

The United Nations has stepped up its public condemnations of those reprisals, conducted visits to women human rights defenders at risk, facilitated the establishment of networks of women human rights defenders and supported the development of policies and laws that strengthen protection.

For example, in Libya the United Nations has engaged with social media companies to fight misinformation and hate speech targeting women's rights activists. In Colombia, more than 5,500 women leaders and human rights defenders have benefitted from protection strategies developed under a UN-Women programme.

Those interventions save lives and help create space for the bravery of women human rights defenders to be translated into change, but there remains much more that we can — and therefore must — do. The Secretary-

General's report points the way forward. First, we must urgently strengthen reporting and coordination on the United Nations side and further build our partnerships with Member States, regional organizations and civil society.

Secondly, we must provide material and political support to women human rights defenders and their organizations.

Thirdly and finally, we must review and update legislation and administrative measures concerning asylum, temporary relocation or the temporary protected status needed due for gender-based persecution.

Through those measures and more, we can make our political support visible and real. And lest any think that marginalizing women keeps them safe, let us be clear: it achieves the opposite. Denying women space, access or funding because of safety concerns emboldens perpetrators and in their eyes validates their tactics. Women human rights defenders must be front and centre in our work as we move ahead.

We know that the pursuit of inclusive and sustainable peace demands the full participation of women. That point has been made here multiple times and is reflected in the Council's own resolutions and supported by a wide range of evidence. Why then was the level of women's representation in United Nations-led peace processes in 2021 only at 19 per cent — lower than it was in 2020? Why is the level of women's representation even lower in processes not led by the United Nations? And why is it that from 2020 to 2021 we saw a decrease in the level of women's participation in leadership and management structures in refugee and internally displaced persons contexts?

In conflict-affected countries, the proportion of women represented in coronavirus disease (COVID-19) task forces was only 16 per cent — despite women's leading role on the front lines of the COVID-19 response at home and in their communities and professions. And today the level of women's representation in the national parliaments of conflict-affected countries is 5 per cent lower than the global average, while in local Governments it is 12 per cent lower. We know very well what to do. Quotas and temporary special measures remain our best tool to set right those damaging imbalances and promote equality in decision-making.

In the past year, we have seen the Security Council use stronger language to demand women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace processes, such

as in Cyprus or Yemen. Those are welcome demands and I thank the Council for them.

Nonetheless, I urge all those supporting peace processes to insist on women's direct and formal participation and on strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace. I echo the Secretary-General's call for the appointment of Special Envoys with a mandate to insist on women's direct and formal participation and to take specific steps to facilitate it. It should not be — and it is not — beyond us.

Let me turn now to funding, one of the key levers by which our words become reality. Investing in women's leadership and women's civil society organizations and supporting women human rights defenders in conflict contexts is more urgent, more needed and makes more sense than ever. It is encouraging that 103 countries have now adopted national action plans on women and peace and security compared to 37 a decade ago. It is heartening that a growing number of countries are choosing to adopt a feminist foreign policy, and I urge any countries that are going back on such decisions to reconsider. I also welcome the 184 signatories of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.

However, those commitments can fulfil their promise only when they are supported with funding commensurate to the challenge. In 2021 there was a 72 per cent shortfall in funding aimed at preventing and responding to gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies. The share of bilateral aid to fragile and conflict-affected contexts dedicated to gender equality remains at 5 per cent. Funding for women's organizations in conflict-affected countries, where it is most needed, went from \$181 million in 2019 to \$150 million in 2020. In Afghanistan, 77 per cent of women's civil-society organizations have received no funding at all in 2022 and are no longer running programmes. In Myanmar, approximately half of women's organizations had to close following the coup. I call on the international community to reverse that trend. All in a position to do so should significantly step up their funding for gender equality in conflict settings. To fail to do that is to fail to live up to our claims of commitment and support. I urge Member States to live up to their words and to make the choice to fund women's rights defenders and the work of the United Nations and our partners.

We are not naive. We understand that economic pressures around the world are part of what is driving those reductions. But this is also a matter of prioritization.

It is a false economy that increases military spending, which has now reached an all-time high, while neglecting investments that make it less necessary. The women and peace and security agenda demands both our individual commitment and our collective action. UN-Women is doing its part despite the challenges and will continue to do so. We are redoubling our efforts to support an ever more effective integration of women's leadership, women's empowerment and gender equality across humanitarian work. We are doing it through United Nations coordination, supporting meaningful intergovernmental action and supporting Member States to accelerate the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in humanitarian settings.

Just last week UN-Women joined the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the highest-level humanitarian coordination platform of the United Nations system. I thank all the Member States that supported this. It reflects our sister entities' recognition not only of the role and contribution of UN-Women in that space but of how central gender equality is to effective humanitarian action. I assure the Assembly that I will tirelessly advocate for women's leadership and gender equality, together with my entire team, across the breadth of humanitarian response. At UN-Women, we are also committed to ensuring that all we do contributes to the women and peace and security agenda. That includes the Generation Equality Forum, which provides a unique space for public and private partners to work together to achieve transformative change for gender equality.

Let us make the Secretary-General's report a milestone. The needs could not be greater, nor the cause more pressing. We must take its recommendations to heart. I ask that members follow through on measures to protect and empower human rights defenders, because they are there, on the front line, and their courage and leadership deserve nothing less than our full support. I call on Member States to demand that women be properly represented in peace processes. There are no real excuses for anything less. That we are going backwards is surely a simple failure of will. And I urge everyone to make the smart decision on funding and prioritize resources for women and peace and security. Our stated commitments are too far from the reality of where money goes right now, and that needs to change.

We have choices to make. The right ones are clear and compelling and place women at the heart of our agenda. I hope that when we next meet it will be to discuss our success and progress in doing so. The

alternative will not only fail women, but it will fail us all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Bahous for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Diop.

Ms. Diop (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate the Republic of Gabon on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I commend you, Mr. President, and Gabon in particular, for adopting one of the most comprehensive and progressive African national action plans among the 35 that currently exist in Africa. I thank all Council members for organizing this debate focused on women and peace and security, in commemoration of the twenty-second anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). I am also grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her leadership in promoting the effective participation of women in peace, security and development processes, which is expressed not just through her presence at this meeting but her commitment on the ground as well, both in the African continent and throughout the world. I thank her for that commitment. And I thank the Executive Director of UN-Women and her entire team, and all the United Nations agencies, for the technical and financial support provided to our African member States, facilitating the development and implementation of our national action plans.

The Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, which I am representing today, has been formally institutionalized within the African Union (AU) and is the first of its kind in the world. It has served as a model for strategically positioning women's leadership in peace and security governance and works tirelessly to strengthen the voice of women in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in post-conflict reconstruction processes, and to ensure their protection in violent conflicts.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to share some key facts from the report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat. The report was developed with data gathered using the Continental Results Framework, an accountability tool adopted by the AU Peace and Security Council for the delivery of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa.

Twenty-two years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), women continue to face discrimination, underrepresentation and protection challenges. The triple-C crisis of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and conflict has exacerbated the challenges in the political, social and economic fabric within which women and girls evolve, making it urgent that we invest in strengthening women's resilience and leadership. In that regard, I want to share a few examples.

The first example is the crisis in the Lake Chad basin. I visited the terrain with my sister Amina Mohammed. The continued presence of Boko Haram and the shrinking of the lake, as well as the long-distance walk for women to collect firewood, have harmed women through kidnapping, forced recruitment into the insurgency and the depletion of livelihoods, with many experiencing sexual violence and fleeing into refugee and displaced persons camps. Their call for essential commodities, such as energy-saving cooking stoves and other necessary tools that empower them, can be heard loudly and must be addressed.

In the Sahel, the wish of many kidnapped girls who have experienced violence and who, after being rescued, wish to resume schooling, demonstrates their determination to continue to live and thrive. We must, therefore, dedicate the appropriate institutions and facilities to accommodate their unique situations.

Conflict-related sexual violence in the Great Lakes regions and in other parts of the continent, fuelled by COVID-19 and creating a shadow pandemic, remains a serious protection concern and deepens the political and humanitarian crises we are facing. It is therefore incumbent upon us to create safe spaces for women and girls in conflict situations.

While women's participation in peace processes serves to ensure their success and sustainability, they continue to be left out of such processes. In that connection, we welcome the recent appointment of Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as a member of the African Union Panel of the Wise and a member of the mediators team to the Ethiopian peace negotiations, and we call for the participation of more women in such dialogues.

The women and peace and security agenda remains a core priority of the African Union, with the formulation of critical policies, platforms and solutions. One of these is our model of joint solidarity

missions between the African Union and the United Nations, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General. Those missions reach out to women in crises situations and have been deployed in countries such as Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name but a few. That has been done through the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) platform, which continues to empower women in decision-making processes and to raise the voice of women and girls through its current 30 national chapters in Africa. In Mali, for example, following the embargo by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), AWLN facilitated a meeting between a delegation of Malian women and ECOWAS leaders and advocated for the lifting of the sanctions, which were having such a harmful effect on the Malian population and on the women and girls, in particular. Another platform is FemWise Africa, which has continued to train and deploy women in mediation and electoral processes, which is another model that we have seen replicated in other continents.

As part of my Office's efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls, a few weeks ago, together with Special Representative Pramila Patten, we briefed the African Union Peace and Security Council, in Addis Ababa, on the alarming situation of conflict-related sexual violence and recommended the adoption of preventive measures in that regard. In addition, my Office commissioned research on sexual violence in the Sahel, which recommended the replication of the Isange Rwanda model — an inclusive model of a safe space for women. On the basis of a study, a group of women developed a plan of action for the Sahel. We call for more support in the implementation of this plan for the women of the Sahel.

The Security Council and the United Nations, in partnership with regional entities in the United Nations and civil society, can better support resilience and leadership in many ways. In my view, one of the key ways to do so is by adopting a human security approach. At this juncture, I wish to mention a few critical elements in that regard.

First, we must ensure that women's organizations have access to predictable and flexible funding. That would allow them to effectively carry out peacebuilding efforts in the current difficult circumstances.

Secondly, the impact of climate change, COVID-19 and conflicts and wars require us to combine

peacebuilding efforts with women's economic survival as mutually reinforcing strategies.

Thirdly, deliberate measures are required in order to increase women's participation and inclusion in peace negotiations, including as lead mediators and negotiators, and ensure the insertion of clear provisions in peace agreements and related legal instruments in that regard.

Finally, we need to protect demobilized female ex-combatants from social stigmatization and work towards ensuring a conducive environment for a smooth social reintegration.

As we emerge from the shackles of the COVID-19 pandemic and face the consequences of the war in Ukraine, which has affected Africa with regard to the three Fs — food, fuel and finance — and as we battle the climate crisis, we must be resolute and invest more in women and peace and security agenda. In this second decade of implementing resolution 1325 (2000), the loss of women's human rights around the world is of grave concern to all of us. We must stand in solidarity with women survivors of violence and women human rights defenders and must promote their agency through the lens of positive masculinity.

In conclusion, Member States must implement existing policies, strategies and action plans in order to influence and have an impact on national security, political, and social and economic policies. In that regard, African Member States must allocate adequate financing and institute coordination and accountability mechanisms, including by reporting on existing frameworks. At this time, I would like to thank Member States that have been supportive of my work of the women and peace and security agenda in my Office, in Addis Ababa and in the African Union.

In addition, coherent implementation of humanitarian and peace strategies, as enshrined in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will address some of the root causes of conflict and ultimately promote the women and peace and security and human security agendas.

Lastly, on behalf of all the women of Africa that I represent, I wish to call to the Council to strengthen its collaboration with the AU Peace and Security Council in order to align priorities and actions on the ground in support of women's full participation in peace processes. As others have said, we need to prioritize and should not forget Africa, a continent that continues

to experience a great deal of conflict and where women continue to suffer. Therefore, we call on the Council to use the established frameworks to pay attention to what is happening in our continent.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Diop for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Nader.

Ms. Nader: My name is Zahra Nader. I am Editor-in-Chief of Zan Times, a woman-led newsroom that covers human rights violations in Afghanistan. It is both an honour and a responsibility to discuss the devastating situation of Afghan women and girls with the Security Council today. I am here because I can be. However, it is important that the Council continue to hear directly from diverse Afghan women, including those still living in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, who risk their lives on a daily basis to speak truth to power.

Just weeks ago, the suicide bombing of the Kaaj education centre killed at least 55 people, including 51 Hazara girls and women, and injured at least another 124. As a Hazara woman myself, what makes that incident especially painful is that it was an attack both on my community and on girls' education. Those Hazara girls were there to take entrance examinations to go to college and become journalists, doctors or engineers. They dreamed of lives that today seem more out of reach than ever before. That attack is a potent symbol of the assault on the rights of women, girls, the Hazaras and all other marginalized groups under Taliban rule, which is the focus of my statement today.

Experts are warning the international community that my country has descended into authoritarianism and gender apartheid. Today an estimated 20 million women and girls who grew up in Afghanistan going to school and to work and who grew up being able to go where they liked and to speak their minds are under the Taliban, deprived of those fundamental human rights because of their gender. The Taliban are arresting and imprisoning the male relatives of women and girls for failing to comply with their policies. Forced and child marriages are on the rise. One shocking case involved Elaha Dilawarzai, an Afghan medical student, who was raped, tortured and forced into marriage by a Taliban member. Her current whereabouts are unknown. The only reason that we know about Elaha's case is because she shared a video.

The truth is that we do not know, and will probably never know, the full extent of the violations taking place because United Nations monitoring is thin on the ground and the Afghan media, especially women journalists, have been crushed by the Taliban. Most of the international media have left, and the Taliban have terrorized into silence anyone who dares to oppose them.

Women, of course, are the Taliban's main target. In the past year, we witnessed violent crackdowns on anyone protesting against their misogynist policies. We interviewed people involved in the September 2021 anti-Taliban protests in Mazar-e-Sharif. They shared shocking accounts of how the Taliban had beaten, abducted, tortured and imprisoned women for their role in peaceful protests. Some activists, such as Frozan Safi, were even killed. Another woman, who spent 11 days in Taliban custody for protesting, told us that she witnessed Taliban members slapping children, putting guns to their heads in order to pressure their mothers and forcing women to confess at gunpoint.

Why are the Taliban going to such lengths to silence women? It is because, to date, Afghan women have mobilized the most consistent and peaceful opposition to Taliban policies. Women took to the streets as recently as this week, chanting "Bread, work, freedom" — a call that encapsulates our key demands. We need bread, but survival alone is not enough. We demand independence and the right to work, participate fully and equally in society and take control of our own lives. We insist on freedom, which is the non-negotiable lifeblood and right of every person, as decreed by the United Nations and its Member States.

The Taliban view women protesters as the enemy because they are exposing the scale of the Taliban's abuse of the Afghan people. Afghan women have become the main obstacle to what the Taliban crave the most: recognition by the international community.

The Taliban are also targeting marginalized communities, such as ethnic and religious groups and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, putting some women at even greater risk. The Hazaras have faced discrimination and abuse for more than a century. Today they are under systematic attack, and experts are warning of the risk of genocide. Since the Taliban took over, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan has been responsible for killing and injuring at least 879 Hazaras. Members of the Hazara

community have mobilized in countries around the world to demand urgent action.

In addition, disturbing reports of war crimes continue to emerge from Panjshir, Balkhab and wherever else the Taliban face armed resistance. The Taliban's assault on human rights, combined with their failure to provide security and necessary services and their extremist interpretation of Islam, have jeopardized the rights and representation of not only Afghanistan's Shia Muslims, but also Sufis, Ahmadis, Hindus and Sikhs. LGBT people in Afghanistan are being attacked, killed, sexually assaulted and threatened by members of the Taliban because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, adding a level of terror to what was already a dangerous existence.

Since the takeover last August, the Security Council has met 11 times on Afghanistan, issued two press statements (SC/14604 and SC/14902) and adopted three resolutions (resolutions 2593 (2021), 2615 (2021) and 2626 (2022)) reaffirming the importance of women's rights. However, such efforts have thus far failed to pressure the Taliban to change course. On the contrary, the Security Council's renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in March was followed by the Taliban's roll-out of some of their most extreme policies, such as extending the ban on girls' secondary education and enforcing full-face coverings and male chaperones for women. Both the United Nations and the Security Council appear at a loss about what to do next. When it comes to women and peace and security, there is a major gap at the United Nations between words and action. The Taliban have no respect for words.

The Security Council has before it overwhelming evidence that the Taliban are terrorizing women, girls and marginalized groups. For the sake of all my sisters in Afghanistan, I urge the Council to take the following steps.

The Security Council should call on the Taliban to respect the human rights of all Afghans, including women, girls, LGBT people and all ethnic and religious groups; end all violations of women's rights; and stop the targeting and abuse of protesters, human rights defenders, journalists and their families.

The Council should not grant the Taliban formal recognition or renew any exemptions to the existing travel bans on Taliban leaders, and should consider

adding additional individuals responsible for violations to the United Nations sanctions list.

The Council should call on all senior United Nations leaders, in particular the Secretary-General and the Head of UNAMA, to press the Taliban at every opportunity to respect the rights of all women, girls and other marginalized groups. It should hold UNAMA accountable for women's rights throughout its work.

The Council should ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of Afghan women civil society in any decision-making regarding the future of Afghanistan, including its own decisions. It should support the establishment of an additional United Nations mechanism to provide accountability for human rights violations.

As a journalist, it is my job to bear witness. What I can clearly see is that the Taliban have already done permanent harm to the women and girls of Afghanistan, and every day that the Security Council fails to take action, that harm deepens. People in Afghanistan, especially women, are watching this debate, as are women in other conflict zones around the world. If the Council fails to act in Afghanistan, women in Ethiopia, Myanmar, the Sudan and Yemen will know that, in the hands of the Security Council, women and peace and security is nothing more than an empty promise.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Nader for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Gabon.

It is a great moment for the peoples of the world and all humankind when, in the Security Council Chamber, we recognize, and call for further recognition, of women's leadership in peace and security in the world. It is a time in which we encourage women to hold their heads high and stand in support of the security and dignity of the peoples of the world.

We are reminded of a Gabonese proverb that says that if women give up the world will fall apart.

I thank Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed, Executive Director Sima Bahous and Special Envoy Bineta Diop for being in the Chamber today to reaffirm their continued commitment to this advocacy through their inspiring briefings. I thank Ms. Nader for her moving testimony.

Today's meeting is taking place driven by an international context marked by multiple crises that require concerted, supportive and inclusive responses from the international community. Indeed, many regions of the world are collapsing under the stranglehold of armed groups and terrorist gangs. The torment suffered by civilian populations in these regions is horrific and tragic. And women are paying an inhuman price. Internationally traded and transferred weapons fuel armed conflict and cause social and political upheaval, including small arms used to commit femicide, or explosive weapons used in populated areas with potentially singular impacts on women, who are either targeted or specifically affected by their use.

Women must no longer pay the heavy price in the context of armed conflict. They must increasingly be part of the response by participating fully in all peacemaking and decision-making processes. Women's participation in all stages of the conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution process is one of the surest ways to achieve a more sustainable peace in the world.

Every day, women peacemakers and human rights defenders demonstrate, in contexts that are clearly unfavourable to them, that they are still standing and that they have a crucial role to play in preventing conflicts and working towards a lasting peace, even though their voices are not sufficiently taken into account, or their contribution is not fully appreciated in official negotiation processes. This damning observation is sufficient to call attention to the extent of the action expected of the international community — and the Security Council, in particular — to strengthen women's leadership and resilience, on the one hand, and ensure their full and meaningful participation in all peacemaking and decision-making processes, on the other.

While it is undeniable that the international community's advocacy in favour of the recognition of women as key actors in peace processes has gradually gained significant resonance, my country remains concerned that, almost 22 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), women and children continue to pay a heavy price, especially in conflict-ridden and armed-group-affected areas. In most of these armed-group-infested regions, the usual narratives focus on women's protection and vulnerability, with little or no emphasis on what the primary source of danger for women is or on women's diverse identities, experiences, and capacities. Beyond the protection of women in

war and the insistence that they have an equal right to participate in the processes and negotiations that end wars, our normative edifices devoted to women-made peace should focus on preventing war or challenging the legitimacy of the systems that generate war.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm our strong commitment to silencing weapons, particularly through the fight against the illicit transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons, their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled proliferation in many regions, especially on the African continent, which have all kinds of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences, including on the security of civilians, and which fuel armed conflicts, promote the resurgence of sexual and gender-based violence and the recruitment of child soldiers and seriously threaten peace, stability and sustainable development at the local, national, regional and international levels. To foster the resilience of women facing cyclical insecurity, we need to focus on conflict prevention rather than engagement in the systems that generate and sustain conflict. Reducing arms exports and imports remains an integral part of women, peace and security programmes. Implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty to prevent armed conflict and armed violence is imperative. A range of perspectives must be presented in discussions and negotiations, including critiques of prevailing structural inequalities and normative frameworks.

It is clear that women's substantive participation can create space for alternative conceptions of security and the prevention of armed conflict and armed violence, by offering an alternative to the use of military force as a response. It is therefore also clear that recognizing the centrality of women in the context of peace is a catalyst not only for their empowerment, but also for the dynamization of socioeconomic and political landscapes, while predisposing them towards the peaceful resolution of disputes that may arise.

For that reason, my country's sociopolitical compass under the leadership of President Ali Bongo Ondimba remains to substantially reduce gender inequalities and promote women's participation in all decision-making processes. This ambition is perfectly reflected in the remarkable presence of women at the helm of three of the four highest institutions in Gabon, namely, the Prime Minister, the President of the Senate and the President of the Constitutional Court — all of whom, once again, are women — as are the heads of several ministerial departments, including the Ministry of

the Armed Forces. Furthermore, to ensure sustainable representation of women in the political sphere, we have set up the "Political Mentoring Programme for Young Women", whose objective is to encourage them to engage in political action, in order to increase their representation in decision-making bodies.

Gabon remains firm and consistent in its advocacy for the inclusion and participation of women and for strengthening their resilience, as well as for ensuring perpetrator accountability for sexual violence in times of conflict. States' commitment and judicial institutions' firmness must be unequivocal in responding to sexual violence in conflict. It is fundamental to facilitate access to reparations, which is a key element in restoring the dignity of affected persons, while a global preventive approach that adapts to situations on the ground is being developed. It is essential that the Security Council unanimously advocate for access to international justice for victims of sexual violence in conflict situations. This is a pledge of hope, dignity and human reconstruction and a question of fundamental rights.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming my country's willingness to amplify the voices of women who, throughout the world, are proving to be extraordinary leaders, agents of change, pioneers of sustainable development and artisans of peace. These women who, even under extreme conditions of extremist violence, fragility and distress, demonstrate unparalleled courage and remarkable resilience.

We call for intensified national, regional and global efforts for the comprehensive, inclusive, and efficient implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and its related resolutions, including resolutions 1820 (2008) and 2467 (2019), as well as for the strengthening of the gender dimension in all stages of peace processes and in prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. It is crucial that the virtues of women's leadership be the driving force behind our collective action for a world attuned to our peoples' aspirations for security and dignity.

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): Let me thank Gabon for hosting this very important debate. The large number of speakers that we

have on our list today reflects the high priority that we all give this issue.

I also want to thank Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed for her strong support and for her presence with us today.

I thank UN-Women Executive Director Bahous, Special Envoy Diop and Ms. Nader for their excellent briefings today.

As outlined in resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda offers a transformational vision for a world in which women and girls are protected, included and play an essential role in forging peace. Our charge is to make that vision a reality — not just in words but also in deeds and actions.

For its part, the United States took the important step of codifying its commitment to women's participation and safety in peace and security processes. Today we call on other countries to do the same. We must all be held accountable, and we must be accountable. We must build on the growing body of policies to affirm gender equality and equality in security, peacemaking and peacekeeping.

That call is urgent because right now, we face a pivotal moment for the women and peace and security agenda. Around the world, women and girls are under threat from conflict and repressive regimes, climate and poverty. Risks have gone up, including the threat of kidnapping, torture, killing and gender-based violence. Women leaders, human rights defenders and activists are particularly targeted by online threats, harassment and abuse. They are often the subject of disinformation campaigns that are designed to intimidate, discredit and silence their calls for peace. We see those same patterns around the world, especially in areas of conflict.

In Ethiopia this past week, we have seen renewed and horrific violence. The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia found reasonable grounds to believe that Ethiopian National Defence Forces, the Eritrean Defence Forces and Fano have committed widespread acts of rape and sexual violence against Tigrayan women and girls. The Commission also reported that Tigrayan forces have also committed acts of rape and sexual violence.

In Ukraine, the United Nations has verified more than 100 cases of rape and sexual assault since Russia's full-scale invasion in February. Those cases are only

the tip of the iceberg. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict said,

“When women are held for days and raped, when you start to rape little boys and men, when you see a series of genital mutilations, when you hear women testify about Russian soldiers equipped with Viagra, it is clearly a military strategy”.

It is a military strategy that uses rape as a weapon of war.

In Afghanistan, we must recognize the heroic women and girls who navigate the destructive repressive policies of the Taliban. We heard from Ms. Nader about the horrific attack perpetrated on a Hazara school, killing more than 60 people. Those policies defy the standards set out in our resolutions.

As we work to counter those unacceptable policies and lift the voices of women, the United States established the United States-Afghan Consultative Mechanism, which systematically engages a diverse range of Afghan voices, particularly women and civil society leaders, to ensure that their perspectives are integrated into our policy discussions. We also launched the Alliance for Afghan Women's Economic Resilience, based on consultations with Afghan women. Our goals with those efforts and others are to support and respond to the innovation and resilience among Afghan women at this harrowing time.

Finally, the eyes of the entire world are on Iran right now. Courageous and brave Iranians from across society — women and men — are protesting the death of Mahsa Amini. They are protesting the fact that she was killed by the Iranian morality police for the crime of being a woman. They are protesting the denial of the basic freedoms to which every woman and girl — every person — should be entitled.

Whether it is Iran, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Haiti, Burma or elsewhere, this is a moment. It is a moment where women and girls are looking to us — the Security Council — to support them in their bravery and time of need. To do that, we must fortify the United Nations infrastructure we have established over the past decade to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. We must ensure that women and peace and security language is deliberately and strategically integrated into Security Council resolutions. We must promote women's leadership, whether in villages, capitals or on the international stage, just as we five women members

of the Security Council and the many other women we see in the Chamber today promote women's leadership.

We need to make this a critical moment to band together as a global community, not just to wear pink today as a sign of our support but also to raise our voices to demand the change that we know that the women of the world need. We know that we can do that. We must do it. We must do it for girls and women and for the peace and security they will bring the world, but also for the peace and security that they need to have from the world.

Ms. Fino (Albania): I would like to commend the presidency of Gabon for organizing today's important meeting on the women and peace and security agenda and I thank the briefers for their insights.

While there is increased engagement in and commitment to strengthening the normative framework of women and peace and security, the situation on the ground remains highly unsatisfactory. Despite the well-known fact that women play a crucial role in the achievement of sustainable peace and conflict prevention, the fact is that we are witnessing important gains in the field of women's rights being erased and undone because of violent conflicts, military coups d'état, violent takeovers, displacement and hunger.

Women peacebuilders, human rights defenders, advocates for gender equality, journalists and other civil society representatives are under attack because of their activism and their efforts to build better societies and protect their rights. From Afghanistan to Yemen, Iran and Syria, and from Myanmar to Mali and Ethiopia — to name only a few — women activists face increased threats and risks, including intimidation, arbitrary detention, forced disappearances and even targeted killings.

In Ukraine, the unprovoked, unjustified and illegal aggression by Russia has had devastating effects on women's rights and well-being. Ukrainian women activists, civil-society actors, journalists and human rights defenders face increased risks to their safety and security, including increased risks of abductions and persecution.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban has enacted more than 30 policies, with the only objective being to exclude women and girls from public life, including by denying education and access to justice. Women civil-society representatives, women protesters and human rights defenders have become a clear target for the Taliban,

who are terrified of women when they peacefully protest and speak out against the Taliban's abuses. Last month, a 22-year-old girl lost her life at the hands of the Iranian morality police. That triggered a wave of women-led protests across the country — to chants of "Women, life, freedom" — that have been going on for four weeks now. Due to the brutal crackdown on the protests, many have lost their lives and many more are unaccounted for, including women, girls and young children.

Albania welcomes and supports the Secretary-General's report and recommendations on women and peace and security (S/2022/740) and the open letter of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, which was signed by 481 civil-society organizations. We must take concrete action to create a safer and more friendly environment for women human rights defenders, civil-society representatives, peacebuilders and journalists, free from reprisals. We cannot aim to achieve the full and effective participation of women in peace and security processes without ensuring their protection and physical safety. It is high time to move beyond rhetoric and take bold action to address violence targeting women in peace and security processes and protect their meaningful participation. In Albania's view, women should not only be in the room, but they must also be at the table where discussions happen and decisions are taken. I would like to focus on four points that we believe are essential to strengthening women's resilience and improving the protection of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders in conflict and post-conflict situations.

First, providing appropriate support and resources to the relevant United Nations entities, especially the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, would enable them to properly assist women human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil-society representatives at risk of harm, including those who have briefed the Security Council or otherwise engaged with the United Nations system.

Secondly, we must bolster funding for women-led and women's rights organizations and movements in fragile and conflict-affected countries. The stronger the women's movement, the stronger the voice of the women human rights defenders and peacebuilders.

Thirdly, we must enhance accountability with regard to women and peace and security. We need to commit to a zero-tolerance approach to reprisals against women activists and human rights defenders.

Fourthly, we must strengthen partnerships with civil-society organizations to identify the best ways to improve the protection and resilience of women civil-society activists and human rights defenders.

The Security Council also has a key role to play. It must stand with all women human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil-society activists and show its solidarity by supporting women's meaningful participation in peace processes and holding the entire United Nations system and host States of peacekeeping operations accountable for ensuring women's direct participation in peace processes. The Council should follow up on recommendations and priority issues raised by civil-society briefers.

Gender equality is a high priority for the Albanian Government. Albania currently ranks among the top five gender-balanced Governments in the world, with 70 per cent of its ministers being women. Some of the top public positions in Albania, including in independent institutions, agencies, and departments in key areas of the State, are held by women. The Albanian Government recognizes gender equality as one of the principles of its planning and budgeting processes, which is reflected in an increase of budget allocations for gender-equality results over the years. In 2021, gender-responsive budgeting elements constituted 9 per cent of our total planned annual budget, compared to just 1 per cent in 2015. In May of this year, the Albanian Government launched preparations for our second national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). As a result of those policies, the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2022* ranked Albania eighteenth out of 146 countries. Albania will continue to keep women and peace and security high on the Security Council's agenda and will prioritize the participation of women civil-society briefers in the Council.

Let me conclude by highlighting that increasing resilience and protection for women civil-society activists and human rights defenders must be a priority for us all. Attacks on them, wherever and whenever they occur, are unacceptable. As agents of positive change, women must be active participants in all peace and security efforts. We can no longer exclude one half of humankind from international peace and security.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): The United Arab Emirates thanks Gabon for organizing this open debate and welcomes the fact that Gabon has joined the shared commitments to prioritize women and peace

and security during its presidency. We thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Executive Director Sima Bahous, African Union Special Envoy Bineta Diop and especially Ms. Zahra Nader for their powerful contributions today.

There are many contexts around the world that we could use as examples of the resilience of women and girls, but one of the most prominent today is that of Afghan women and girls. It has been almost 400 days since girls in Afghanistan have been forbidden to attend secondary schools. There are no ifs or buts. The United Arab Emirates finds that situation, and the many other restrictions in place since the Taliban took over, to be completely unacceptable. The exclusion of Afghan women and girls from public and social life is yet another example of how violence against women and girls can take numerous forms. In the face of that violence, we continue to hear inspirational stories of women teachers and students tirelessly pursuing their right to education in Afghanistan. They use digital tools to attend classes in the metaverse. But can we find a better alternative to forcing women and girls into the virtual space? I think we can and must. If we accept it as a long-term solution, we are enabling gender apartheid.

Despite the resistance of women and girls around the world to repeated acts of misogyny, armed groups are exacerbating the challenges through acts of violence in all its forms. They erode the social fabric of communities. They abuse, persecute, detain and oppress women, and therefore by focusing today's discussion on how to strengthen women's resilience under those circumstances, we honour the core idea of the women and peace and security agenda at its inception. At the press stakeout earlier, Mr. President, you were asked what these Council meetings actually achieve. Today let us commit to answering that question. Gabon's action-oriented approach today is welcome in capturing the recommendations we all make in a leader's summary. The United Arab Emirates therefore proposes the following four recommendations.

First, we know that local and regional women's networks and organizations are key. When violence in communities erupts, its impact can be crippling and lifelong. Those networks provide a foundation for collective resilience against conflict. Yet as we heard from Executive Director Bahous today, those networks continue to face barriers in access to consistent and reliable funding. They rely on the goodwill of individual Member States, yet still bilateral contributions went

down from 0.4 to 0.3 per cent in just one year. We lack a systematic approach, despite the financial mechanisms that exist. Accordingly, as a key recommendation today we would ask the Fifth Committee to consider funding women's organizations as part of the regular budget of the United Nations.

Secondly, when women participate in the economy and directly benefit from that participation, they are more resilient in the face of violence. In the age of digitalization, the economic and social growth of women and girls increasingly depends on their access to digital technologies. In Oyo state in Nigeria, the She Learns Here initiative provides workshops where rural women learn basic business and digital skills. If they are to be on a par with their male peers in the economy, women's digital literacy and connectivity are indeed bare necessities, but no one should have to exist solely in the metaverse to have their rights protected. Their voices need to be heard and amplified in school, with their classmates, and in all other facets of public life, where they belong. Let us give women and girls the digital tools to compete in the same world as men and boys.

Thirdly, the protection of women and girls is bolstered when women peacekeepers, observers and protection officers are in the field. This is why the Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Women, Peace and Security initiative, developed by the United Arab Emirates in partnership with UN-Women, launched its third training programme for women cadets in September. Recently, Executive Director Bahous got to meet the new cohort of cadets from Kenya, India, Bahrain and elsewhere, seeing first-hand the impact that the initiative is having in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. We have repeatedly heard cadets link their training to their later success in service, bolstering their self-confidence and critical skills.

Investments in such capacity help strengthen gender-responsive and inclusive security sector reform at the national and international levels. That could be a significant change in effective responses to threats and violence by armed groups. Financing for such capacity-building must accelerate, particularly as conflicts become more dangerous than ever before for all of us.

As we inch closer to another anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), we must reflect on what that really means. We find ourselves still battling the misconceptions of women and girls as victims or survivors, but not as agents of change. We are witnessing

Afghanistan rapidly roll back into the same place it was 22 years ago.

Within that same time frame, the international community, including the Council, has been adequately and sufficiently equipped with the necessary tools to drive the agenda forward. The political will, as well as the framework, apparently exist. More than ever, action is the missing piece. As we heard from Ms. Melinda Gates at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, we need to stop talking about empowering women and just give them power. I can think of no better final recommendation for the Security Council.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me thank the Deputy Secretary-General and all our briefers today for their testimony, advocacy and leadership.

As we mark the anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), the United Kingdom is proud to be a leading champion of the women and peace and security agenda at the United Nations and around the world. Yet the stark reality presented by our briefers speaks for itself. Despite our collective efforts of 22 years, we all need to do more to deliver on the promise of resolution 1325 (2000).

Today I would like to highlight three of the United Kingdom's priorities.

First, it is clear that we need to strengthen the global response to conflict-related sexual violence. A 20 per cent increase in sexual violence against children and a 41 per cent increase in the abduction of girls, as documented in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2022/493), cannot be ignored.

That is why the United Kingdom will host an international conference on preventing sexual violence in conflict on 28 and 29 November. We will gather countries together to galvanize the response to conflict-related sexual violence, and we will launch a political declaration to send a strong message that we will support survivors, help prevent future violence and hold perpetrators to account. We urge Member States to endorse the declaration and make a national commitment outlining the practical steps that they will take to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, such as by implementing the Murad Code.

Secondly, we continue to support women's participation in peace efforts. Women are integral to building lasting peace and security; their full, equal

and meaningful participation in peace processes is the cornerstone of our approach to women and peace and security. But progress in that area has been too slow, as we heard today. There has been no significant increase in women's participation in peace processes since 2000, despite all the rhetoric.

The United Kingdom's fifth women and peace and security national action plan will therefore focus on concrete and practical ways to reflect the contribution that women make to peace in a changed strategic environment, from Afghanistan to Ukraine and from climate security to cyberthreats.

Thirdly, we need to create an enabling environment for women to participate. A major barrier to women's engagement in political life is the rising risk of reprisals. The Secretary-General's report (S/2022/740) highlights that since 2018, more than one third of the women briefers to the Security Council have faced reprisals. That is simply not acceptable. The United Kingdom is committed to protecting women human rights defenders and briefers who courageously speak in this Chamber. In partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, we have developed guidance for Member States to mitigate reprisals against civil society briefers.

Women's place at the peace table is not only their right; it is essential to building and sustaining peace and security. Every absence will be our collective loss.

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): I thank Gabon for hosting this very important debate today. My thanks also go to Deputy Secretary-General Mohamed, Executive Director Bahous and Special Envoy Diop for their remarks, and especially to Ms. Nader, whose words about the realities faced by women in Afghanistan resonate with and challenge us all.

There can be no sustainable peace when women are targeted in war and excluded from peace processes. Women are essential to resolving conflict and building peace. Although women have shown their resilience time and time again, both in conflict-affected countries and elsewhere, such resilience should not be necessary. As we near the end of our term as a member of the Security Council, to our deep regret we cannot report much progress. We have to admit that the situation of women in conflict has worsened over the past two years.

Women and girls continue to bear the brunt of war and conflict. In Ukraine, the Russian invasion has resulted in the displacement of millions of women,

violated their rights and placed them at heightened risk of violence and trafficking. In Afghanistan, as we have heard from Ms. Nader, women are being erased from political and public life and have been stripped of their fundamental rights. In Haiti, women and girls have been subjected to unthinkable and systematic sexual and gender-based violence.

The Council is tasked with maintaining peace and security in the world. Yet today we see more people impacted by conflict than ever. In order to begin to reverse that, one urgent and meaningful step would be to implement what each of us around this table has agreed to under the women and peace and security agenda. That involves empowering and strengthening women's leadership.

Today Ireland's statement will focus on four ways to achieve that.

First, we must protect those who defend women's rights. It is shameful to see States or non-State actors attacking those who are protecting others — those who raise their voice to challenge oppression. Yet globally we are witnessing alarming levels of reprisals being committed against human rights defenders. Autocratic leaders and repressive Governments aim to silence their voices because they fear them. Women human rights defenders can face specific targeting driven by violent misogynistic rhetoric.

The crackdown on protesters in Iran following the death in appalling circumstances of Mahsa Amini and the persecution of activists in Myanmar are shocking and disturbing examples. We must investigate and hold to account those responsible for the intimidation of and attacks against human rights defenders. As the Secretary-General states in his report (S/2022/740), that is our collective moral responsibility.

Secondly, we must push for women to be at all decision-making tables, including this table. We thank all Member States that have joined the women and peace and security presidency shared commitments, which were initiated by Kenya, Mexico and Ireland last year. The women and peace and security presidency trio set a blueprint for bringing more women voices to the Security Council. We invite incoming members and others to build on the initiative and continue to ensure the safe and meaningful participation of women briefers here.

That also means including women in all political and peace processes, from the grass-roots to the national and

regional levels. Without inclusive participation, peace agreements are simply not sustainable. We understand that essential truth from our own involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process. Therefore, we reiterate our call on the United Nations to lead by example and make women's participation in all United Nations-led or jointly led peace processes an essential requirement.

Thirdly, we must prevent violence against women and girls. We need look only to northern Ethiopia, where women and girls have suffered horrific sexual crimes, or Mali, where there has been a 40 per cent increase in conflict-related sexual violence in the past year alone. Those situations bear witness to what happens when we do not focus on prevention. In those and other contexts, conflict-related sexual violence is being used as a tactic of war. We must therefore make it a strategically costly tactic. The perpetrators, the people who give orders and those who fail to take the necessary steps to stop conflict-related sexual violence — they must all be held to account. The prevention of violence also includes ensuring that women have full access to sexual and reproductive health care and rights. Deploying gender advisers and women protection advisers to United Nations country teams and missions also plays a crucial role in monitoring and promoting such issues. The Council should consistently include those roles in all peacekeeping and political missions.

Fourthly, we must back our words with funding and adequate resourcing. We have heard today that global military spending stands at \$2.1 trillion, following seven consecutive years of increased spending. It accounts for more than four times the amount spent on bilateral aid. We must look hard at our priorities and ensure that we are putting our investments in peacebuilding. The President asked us to highlight any new concrete commitments to advance the women and peace and security agenda. Ireland has committed to investing at least \$50 million in feminist and women's rights organizations and women peacebuilders over a period of five years. We have made a specific pledge of \$1.5 million to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

Finally, as I have said, today's debate on women and peace and security will likely be Ireland's last during its Council term. I therefore want to offer a parting reflection. During the past two years, in chairing the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, we have seen a great demonstration of will and commitment by Member States to

advancing that agenda. The presidency's commitments have signalled that. However, we cannot afford to let public commitment be just for show, advanced when it suits and laid aside when inconvenient. We implore every speaker today to make women's empowerment and participation non-negotiable in their vision for a peaceful future.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China commends Gabon for convening today's important meeting, and I would like to thank all of the briefers for their statements. Resolution 1325 (2000) ignited the international community's heightened attention to the special situation of women in conflict, redefined the relationship between women and peace and security and greatly enhanced the agency and participation of women in the field of peace and security. It was a milestone. Strengthening the resilience of women in conflict zones is an inherent part of the women and peace and security agenda, and China commends Gabon for making it the theme of today's meeting. I would like to share four points on that theme.

First, we must put fairness and justice into practice in order to give women hope for their future. Behind strength and resilience lies hope for the future. Where there is hope there is direction. Where there is hope there is strength. Women and families in conflict zones are often devastated and suffer a multitude of hardships. Achieving fairness and justice is the only way to help women believe that they have a future worth looking forward to, and that it is a beautiful one.

The question of Palestine has dragged on for more than 70 years. Without a solution, generations of Palestinian women have seen their hair go from black to white. A Palestinian girl in Gaza aged 12 today has already witnessed five armed conflicts since the day she was born. The international community should wait no longer. We must come up with concrete actions to uphold justice and deliver on our commitments with a view to promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question without delay, restoring belated justice for Palestinian women and ensuring that girls in Gaza can believe in peace and see hope.

Secondly, we must follow through on gender equality in order to give women more opportunities to participate. The participation of women in the peace process is not only an absolute requirement for women's empowerment and gender equality but also an important condition for achieving lasting peace in conflict zones.

The international community has an untold historical debt to women in that regard. In major peace processes throughout the world over the past 30 years, only 13 percent of negotiators and 6 percent of moderators and agreement signatories have been women. That situation should be improved as soon as possible. Every country should take action to eliminate all forms of discrimination, give women more opportunities to participate in the political process and ensure their equal and effective participation in national governance. The international community should also actively support women's participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations and give full play to women's unique advantages in protecting vulnerable groups and engaging in community outreach. Today many of our colleagues have mentioned the plight of Afghan women. China hopes that Afghan women will see their fundamental rights and interests protected and that they will be organically reintegrated into the country's economic and social life and become an important force in the process of peaceful national reconstruction.

Thirdly, we must endeavour to ensure the protection of women so that they can enjoy peace and stability. The international community has made great efforts to protect women in conflict areas and has achieved some progress, but there is still a long way to go. Terrorism, combined with armed conflict, is rampant in regions such as the Sahel, and women and children suffer the most. The Security Council should place Africa higher on its agenda and should not let other problems reduce its attention to African issues. The Council should invest further energy and resources in Africa in resolving conflicts and supporting reconstruction there so that every African woman can benefit from the peace dividend.

Today Haiti is known as the most dangerous place in the western hemisphere. Gang violence has continued to escalate, and the maiming of women and children is even more appalling. The international community should impose targeted sanctions on Haitian gangs, crack down on violent crime and provide a safe living environment for women and children.

Fourthly, it is necessary to carry out development for peace so that women can gain the power of self-reliance. A lack of resilience is rooted in a lack of development. Poverty, hunger and leaving school at an early age make women vulnerable and helpless. Work, education and training can help them change their lives. The current global food crisis is intensifying. The

international community should speed up its response and provide emergency assistance to vulnerable groups such as women in developing countries. We hope that all the parties concerned in the Ukraine issue will promote dialogue and consultation, fully implement the Black Sea Grain Initiative and ensure that more grain is shipped to developing countries.

At the same time, we need to take a long-term approach to supporting women's economic empowerment and helping more women earn their own living. Since last winter China has imported 1,600 tons of Afghan pine nuts via an air corridor, helping Afghan women, who make up half of the industry's labour force, to generate income and lift themselves out of poverty. Unilateral sanctions are seriously undermining the economic foundations of Afghanistan, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela and other countries. They are heavy shackles that are impeding local women's survival and development, and they should be lifted immediately.

As the host country of the Fourth World Conference on Women, China has always advocated for gender equality, supported the women and peace and security agenda and contributed to the international cause of women's development. We worked with UNESCO to create the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education, which to date has provided support to 14 organizations in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Jamaica and other countries. As we speak, the Chinese female astronaut Liu Yang is taking part in a mission at China's space station, contributing she-power to the noble cause of human exploration of the universe. China is willing to work with the international community to dispel the fog of turmoil in conflict areas, open up a future of peace and development and help more women in conflict areas reach for the stars and embrace their future — just as our female astronaut is doing now.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Gabon for convening this open debate. We also thank the briefers for their briefings.

In line with our feminist foreign policy, Mexico reaffirms its support for all women activists, human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil society leaders, who every day risk their lives, their health and their safety in defence of gender equality and human rights throughout the world.

Today we pay tribute to adolescent, indigenous, Afro-descendant, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex, and disabled women activists, as

well as those who are members of ethnic minorities and traditionally marginalized groups, who continue to be victims of threats, sexual and gender-based violence or reprisals in various parts of the world.

That includes the situations in Afghanistan, where egregious violations of the rights of all women and girls have been committed since the return of the Taliban, resulting in the loss of access to basic services, such as health and education; in Myanmar, where women continue to be attacked and tortured for peacefully protesting; in Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where despite brutal acts of sexual violence, the lack of access to justice remains the norm; and in other parts of the world, where women have been on the front line of defence in humanitarian settings and conflict zones.

To them, we say today that their struggle is not in vain. Their resilience inspires us to continue to advocate in the Council and in the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, which we co-chair with Ireland, to ensure that the Security Council incorporates a gender-transformative approach in its work and in all the resolutions and outcomes it adopts. Mexico will continue to defend the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at the negotiating tables and in peace processes, convinced that that is the only way to achieve lasting and inclusive solutions. We are therefore encouraged to note the formation of a parity-based Government in Colombia that is committed to the full inclusion of women in the peace process.

The testimonies of all the women briefers who have come to the Security Council are proof of resilience and determination, in a world in which socioeconomic inequalities, conflict, misogyny, the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and military spending have skyrocketed, causing a major setback to the rights of all women and girls.

My country, Mexico, will continue to seek to ensure enabling environments for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, adolescent women and girls in society. We reiterate that their human rights are non-negotiable. That means that they must have comprehensive access to their sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the right to safe abortion and bodily autonomy, as well as the full provision of mental health services and psychosocial support.

Ensuring gender-sensitive access to justice and accountability for armed groups that perpetrate acts of

sexual and gender-based violence is also essential for deterring further cases and for the full reintegration of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and strengthening their resilience and leadership in conflict. In accordance with that rationale, the draft resolution to establish targeted sanctions against actors destabilizing Haiti, on which Mexico is working with the United States as co-penholder, includes sexual violence as one of the grounds for placing individuals on the sanctions list.

It is equally urgent to ensure the elimination of notions of masculinity that contribute to the radicalization of violence and extremism, gender biases and social norms that place women in a situation of inferiority, such as widows or female heads of household who face interrelated forms of discrimination and are rendered invisible in society.

The Generation Equality Forum, hosted by Mexico and France in 2021, adopted the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, which seeks to articulate the various existing mechanisms to advance that agenda. And with the support of UN-Women, indicators will be launched tomorrow to monitor commitments in five essential areas that will accelerate implementation on the ground.

We also believe that national action plans help to foster the participation of local women-led organizations in peace processes and peacebuilding efforts. I am pleased to note that Mexico's national action plan promotes the development of a women peacebuilders programme for supporting and promoting women's empowerment and leadership at the local and State levels in peacebuilding, gender-based violence prevention and peacekeeping efforts.

Mexico will also continue to advocate gender parity in peace missions. In line with our commitments, currently 25 per cent of the total personnel deployed by Mexico are women and Mexico has strengthened the military and political components of their pre-deployment training.

The international community can count on Mexico to continue defending the human rights of women and girls in this and all multilateral forums.

Mrs. Espescht Maia (Brazil): Brazil thanks the presidency of Gabon for providing the opportunity to reflect upon the concept of resilience, a scientific term originally applied to describe the capacity of some

materials to return to their original shape after being bent or stretched.

Today it is being used to refer to the ability of women and girls to resist adversity. Given the many persistent challenges faced by women and girls in situations of armed conflict, as duly noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/740), analysing how the Security Council can improve its capacity to help them strengthen their resilience is key to our endeavours to advance the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

In that regard, Brazil also thanks Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Amina Mohammed, Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Bineta Diop, Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and Ms. Zahra Nader for their insightful presentations and recommendations.

First of all, we must recognize, as noted in the concept note prepared by Gabon (S/2022/743, annex), the resilience shown by women and women's organizations, which continue to organize themselves and to create ever-growing networks at the community level even in challenging and dangerous environments. That was seen at first hand in Lebanon during the recent visit of the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security. Women and networks of women are making good use of technological developments that enable faster and broader communication and, with the indispensable support of UN-Women, are helping their communities and defending their rights.

But as Ms. Bahous reiterated, we need to improve the ability of UN-Women to assist those networks by increasing financing and improving the capacity of those who are already trying to make a difference in their communities. The efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission to advance the implementation of its gender strategy are commendable in that regard, as are the efforts of United Nations peacekeeping operations, which have worked to implement their women and peace and security mandates, with or without achieving the goals established in terms of the deployment of women peacekeepers.

We are proud of the valuable contribution of our female peacekeepers to the empowerment of host female populations in combating sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, which was recognized by two Military Gender Advocate of the Year Awards

received by Brazil in 2019 and 2020. We do need more women peacekeepers, but we also need to act now, and urgently, on some of the most persistent challenges, which turn women's resilience into a very hard and life-threatening endurance test. Our collective failure to generate improvements on the record of sexual violence in conflict is explicit in the Secretary-General's report, which registers that, in 2021, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in conflict settings increased by 20 per cent, with 98 per cent of survivors being girls.

In Haiti, for instance, both the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have warned of a relevant increase in the reports of sexual violence being used as a weapon by gangs to intimidate and gain control over communities. The signatories of the statement of shared commitments on women and peace and security in the Security Council addressed the situation in Haiti in a stakeout in July. Resolution 2645 (2022), which renewed the mandate of BINUH, recognized the problem by deciding that the BINUH human rights unit needed a dedicated capacity to address sexual and gender-based violence. Brazil favoured language that would improve the protective and preventive work of BINUH. In our view, the Council must maintain a united and unequivocal message of condemnation against the prevailing culture of impunity for the crime of sexual violence in conflict. When the United Nations is already present on the ground, we must not fail to act to put in place better protection capabilities.

In that regard, strategic communications are also an important tool in the effort to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. Peacekeeping operations should invest from the outset in dialogue and engagement with local actors, particularly women and youth, in order to build a protective environment from the bottom up.

The report of the Secretary-General also registers that in many countries, including those affected by conflict, women are at the forefront of protests, refusing to accept decisions that do not recognize their rights. To quote Ms. Bahous once again, "we cannot expect women to build peace if their lives are constantly under threat" (S/PV.8886, p. 5). The Council must work — not only to bring women to peace negotiation tables, but also to protect those that are at the table, or on the ground, from violence and intimidation.

In March, the United Arab Emirates proposed a debate on women's economic inclusion and participation as key to building peace, recalling that, in many countries, legal restrictions persist and constrain women from developing their full economic potential. We should carefully draft and revise peacekeeping mandates so that they are more explicit in their role to promote women's economic inclusion and empowerment, in line with resolution 2242 (2015). Without targeted mandates, it is very unlikely that United Nations operations will contribute to women's access to opportunities, resources and markets.

Another pressing issue requiring urgent action from the Council is the protection of women and girls from attacks on their right to education. The Council should be committed to maintaining full access to education and the workplace for girls and women and must stress that their empowerment and protection are not just a moral and ethical duty, but also a necessity for economic prosperity. Upholding girls' rights also means promoting economic inclusion and, therefore, sustainable economic development.

In terms of conflict prevention, Brazil is proud to have formed, last year, together with Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, the first network of women mediators in Latin America. The Regional Network of Mediators of the Southern Cone is developing a work plan for the upcoming year. Also in our region, an Ibero-American network of women mediators, with a focus on capacity-building, may be created.

The list of possible actions to strengthen women's resilience and to promote their leadership in situations of conflict is endless. Given our limited resources, especially in this context of numerous crises, we must carefully analyse what we have at our disposal so as to ensure that our chosen actions are effective. We cannot continue to miss opportunities to act. The report of the Secretary-General is clear — we are not working hard enough. We must work even harder.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I want to thank Gabon for organizing this timely debate, as well as the Deputy Secretary-General, Executive Director Bahous, Special Envoy Bineta Diop and Ms. Zahra Nader for providing the necessary context for our discussion today.

Thanks to our commitment and hard work within the Security Council, the General Assembly and other United Nations entities, the norms for protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and

girls have gradually been strengthened, yet the daily lived experiences of women and girls and the human rights defenders who protect their rights have been rapidly deteriorating in many countries. That mismatch between words and reality should concern us all. We must all act in partnership in order to break that vicious cycle.

We fully support the theme of this year's annual debate and would like to share some of Norway's experiences in that regard. Where we engage in support of peace processes, Norway always advocates for the formal inclusion of women, in all their diversity. Yet, we also know that the conversations that advance peace and security processes often happen in informal spaces. There, the leadership of local and regional women mediators, peacebuilders and human rights defenders is vital.

One such example is the persistent engagement of local women in Yemen, where Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary, a mediator from the Sheba Youth Foundation for Development, who briefed the Council in January (see S/PV.8946), managed to restore water reservoirs for the citizens of Taiz after several districts had been cut off by armed groups for years.

And we hear Zahra's call about the devastating human rights situation for Afghan women and girls, which is the core of our messaging to the Taliban. Many Afghan women continue to ask the international community to create a platform for them to engage directly with the Taliban. We will continue to look for safe spaces in which they can do so.

In Colombia, in partnership with UN-Women, we have long supported women's organizations in strengthening the implementation of the gender provisions of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. And their advocacy must have left a mark — the unique needs and priorities of women human rights defenders are at the centre of the Government's new emergency protection plan.

In Somalia, women and girls bear the brunt of the perils of insecurity, exclusion, poverty, drought and a devastating humanitarian crisis. Yet, they remain largely underrepresented in formal and informal decision-making bodies. Here, Norway is working for a stronger role for Somali women in peace and reconciliation.

And in Syria, Norway is actively supporting the Syrian Women's Advisory Board, which advises the United Nations Special Envoy on the political process, including the work of the Syrian Constitutional Committee.

We also support the work of women in the agreement monitoring committee of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which continues to remind the parties of the need to prioritize peace dividends and the return of basic social services and is also mobilizing broad support for the peace agreement in their constituencies.

Regrettably, women in public life are often targeted, as a strategy to silence, humiliate and discredit them, including through sexual violence and threats. However, the risk of threats and violence should not be used as a pretext to deny women their right to participate.

We support the development and implementation of national action plans on women and peace and security because the commitment of States is key to both prevention and accountability.

Norway commends the many good examples and recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/740) on how women's protection and participation can be enhanced. In particular, we applaud the call for a more coordinated and systematic approach to supporting women human rights defenders.

In January, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN-Women and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security facilitated consultations with more than 40 civil-society representatives and experts on reprisals against women human rights defenders in conflict-affected countries. I encourage everyone to read the summary report (S/2022/756, annex) and to engage in follow-up of their recommendations.

Finally, I want to encourage both present and future Security Council members to join the shared commitments on women and peace and security. It is important to maintain that cross-regional initiative, which has created a significant shift in the systematic implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the Council's own work and support to women peacebuilders and human right defenders safely engaging with the United Nations.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would first like to thank Gabon for

organizing this open debate. I welcome its commitment to women's rights and to the Security Council's women and peace and security agenda. I thank the Deputy Secretary-General and our other briefers for their valuable insights, and I particularly commend their daily commitment.

France is committed to the full implementation of every aspect of all the resolutions of the women and peace and security agenda. In that regard, I would like to stress three points.

First, women peacebuilders play a fundamental role. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to them all. It is unacceptable that many women are targeted because of their commitment. France calls for robust mandates and sufficient resources for the protection and participation of women in United Nations missions and operations.

Furthermore, the Security Council must reaffirm in one voice that it is not acceptable that the rights of women and girls be flouted. No violence should go unpunished. Therefore, the Security Council must more consistently impose sanctions on the perpetrators of sexual violence in times of conflict. Such violence can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. In that regard, we welcome the work of the International Criminal Court to combat sexual violence.

Lastly, France welcomes the commitment of the Secretary-General to the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women in peace processes. We call for the mainstreaming of the women and peace and security agenda throughout the United Nations system. In that regard, we welcome the leading role of UN-Women, the Department of Peace Operations and the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security.

As the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/740) emphasizes, women bear the brunt of the consequences of the increase in conflicts, coups d'état and population displacements. Given that situation, France has a strong, ambitious and feminist diplomacy. We oppose any complacency, and we aim at concrete action.

Together with Mexico, as my colleague recalled, under the auspices of UN-Women, we co-chaired the Generation Equality Forum in June 2021. The Forum resulted in the raising of more than \$40 billion in unprecedented funding. The Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action was launched at that event, and we call on all States to join it.

As all the speakers reminded us this morning, in the face of violence against women, it is not enough to be outraged. We must act, and we must have the resources. France is currently supporting the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, co-founded by Dr. Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, with €6.5 million.

Finally, France supports the participation of women in all peacekeeping operations. We are committed to continuing our efforts to increase the number of women personnel, as well as their representation at all levels of responsibility, in such operations. That is one of the central axes of our third national action plan on the women and peace and security agenda, launched in 2021.

In line with the shared commitments endorsed this year, the Security Council may rest assured of our unwavering commitment to the full implementation of the women and peace and security resolutions.

Ms. Nthoki (Kenya): I thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her remarks, including the observations, recommendations and goals for the decade reflected in the current report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/740) on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). I also thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Sima Bahous, the African Union (AU) Special Envoy on Women and Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop, and Ms. Zahra Nader for their briefings. We commend Ms. Diop and her Office for promoting women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace processes in Africa and for the reports on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda on our continent. Kenya fully supports the initiative currently under way to establish the AU women, peace and security focal points group to highlight Africa's women and peace and security implementation narrative here in New York.

We celebrate Africa's leadership in advancing the women and peace and security agenda to being a core component of our primary security and normative architecture, as embodied, *inter alia*, in the AU Constitutive Act. Kenya accords great importance to supporting women's resilience and leadership at all decision-making levels, as informed by our Constitution, laws and policies. At the moment, we are implementing and conducting a mid-term review of our second women and peace and security national action plan.

Our national action plan received a further boost from Kenyan voters during the general elections in August. A comparatively peaceful pre-election period boosted women's candidatures. For example, three out of four vice-presidential candidates were female, and the number of female candidates for Governor doubled to 62, as compared to 2017. While the constitutional two-thirds gender rule was not achieved in the ballot, the number of winning candidates rose. Thirty female members of Parliament were elected, up from 23 in 2017, and seven female governors, as compared to three in 2017.

There is still a great deal of effort to be made in ensuring that women leadership is increased to equality in the private sector, particularly in the corporate space. However, Kenyan women are equal owners in micro-, small- and medium-sized businesses, making up 48 per cent of the number that contributes 20 per cent of our national gross domestic product.

In brief, Kenya is a country that has further to travel to full equality, but that is doing so rapidly in multiple spheres. That progress will, in time, be reflected in our continued implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda. Kenya is committed in particular to recognizing the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and, based on that recognition, initiating action to address their increased vulnerabilities in access to resources, services and opportunities in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

The women and peace and security normative framework also reaffirms the critical role that women play across the entire peace continuum, from conflict prevention and resolution to peace transitions and post-conflict recovery. Women's continued role and leadership as first responders, peacekeepers, peacebuilders, mediators, peace signatories, activists, advocates and human rights defenders have been aptly demonstrated despite the difficult circumstances in various regions of the world.

As demonstrated by the stories of women taking ownership of peace in the Photoville travelling exhibition launched during Kenya's Security Council presidency last year at the time of the women and peace and security annual open debate (see S/PV.8886), women are quietly working, or organizing and mobilizing, for peace at the grass-roots level. They are rebuilding broken communities, forging reconciliation and agitating for their rights, even in the face of

oppression, structural inequalities, displacement, human trafficking sexual and gender-based violence, and in the brutality of conflict itself.

Inasmuch as the Council resolutions speak to participation, prevention and relief and recovery of women in the peace and security arena, in practice, we are still witnessing violations of those key women and peace and security pillars, including the denial of basic rights, access to education, economic opportunities, justice and other services. It therefore remains necessary to amplify the voices of women and strengthen women's resilience and leadership at all levels as a path to peace, particularly in regions plagued by armed and militia groups. In this regard, my delegation would like to propose four action points.

The first is to invest in building women's resilience and leadership in a way that corresponds to the context and the immediate threat environment. This means enhanced efforts to integrate localized knowledge, home-grown conflict-management, negotiation and mediation skills. A contextual approach that utilizes the expertise of local women and prioritizes national and regional women protection advisers also allows for more accurate and culturally informed gender-disaggregated data, especially when it comes to addressing the causes, drivers and accelerators of conflict. The agency of local women in early warning and prevention should also be better utilized as a preventive and resilience-building measure. In Kenya, we have seen the value of enhanced gender-mainstreaming in early-warning and response mechanisms, including through local peace committees and local mediation networks. In this regard, we have developed a gender-responsive community-led early-warning and early-response framework.

Secondly, it is imperative for there to be a comprehensive approach in the implementation of all the four pillars of women, peace and security. An investment in one pillar should not be made in isolation from the rest. With specific regard to armed and terrorist groups, we remain concerned that there is too little being done to ensure accountability for sexual and gender-based violence. We reiterate that, for optimal impact, such resolutions as resolution 2242 (2015), which link acts of sexual and gender-based violence with the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab must be implemented alongside other counter-terrorism instruments including resolutions 2354 (2017), 2178 (2014) and 2331 (2016). It is also important to invest

in women's peace and rights advocates and utilize their agency as interlocutors in security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives and mechanisms that deal with those at risk of radicalization and with returnees.

My third point is on capacity-building and training. Identifying areas that need new skills and competencies and establishing institutions that work together are important steps in ensuring resilience. Kenya has institutionalized training programmes for women leaders within Government training institutions. We have also made significant progress in training and recruiting more women into senior positions, including advisory, representative and field-operations functions for both civilian and uniformed personnel. Providing context-appropriate psychosocial and legal support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and the early identification of victims of human trafficking together with their referral to appropriate services also require specialized training, which also involves the enhancement of the expertise and capacities of local women.

My fourth point relates to financing and the socioeconomic empowerment of women and girls. Currently, financing for women's organizations in conflict-affected countries remains minimal, which hampers their agency and potential in peace processes. Ensuring adequate financing to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, women's integration in national economic frameworks and the rollout of national action plans for women, peace and security, in line with the respective national priorities, would also contribute to enhanced resilience.

In conclusion, I join in the call from our fellow co-founders of the Presidency Trio for Women, Peace and Security — Ireland and Mexico — and all States Members of the United Nations that have since joined the initiative to ensure that these shared commitments translate into and continue to inspire action.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank you and your team, Mr. President, for having organized today's meeting on strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a pathway to peace in regions plagued by armed groups. We are grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Sima Bahous, and Special Envoy of the African Union, Ms. Diop, as well as the Editor-in-Chief of the

Zan Times, for their assessments and the information that they have provided.

Our discussion reaffirms the timeliness and relevance of resolution 1325 (2000), which was adopted more than 20 years ago, laying down the bedrock for the issue of women, peace and security. The report of the Secretary-General that has been submitted (S/2022/740) attests to progress in raising the profile of women and strengthening their role in the preservation and resolution of armed conflict, as well as in post-conflict recovery. We are thankful to the Secretary-General for the ongoing focus on issues of expanding the full-fledged participation of women in peacekeeping operations, peace talks and political processes as a whole.

A key objective of the Security Council is the protection of women from violence, which they continue to endure during armed conflict, and there is a great deal yet to be achieved in that regard. Despite the measures that have been adopted, women continue to fall prey to various forms of violence. They are killed and wounded during armed conflict. The specificities of every conflict must be taken into account, and accounting for gender perspectives in the work of the Security Council should not become an end in itself.

At the same time, let us recall that the leading role in the protection of women in conflict is borne by national Governments, whereas measures adopted by the United Nations and civil society should be geared towards supporting and complementing the efforts of States. Duplication must be avoided in the work of various United Nations bodies, and it is necessary to focus on situations that pose a clear threat to international peace and security in line with the prerogatives of the Security Council.

We wish to emphasize that, in efforts aimed at empowering women, protecting their rights and ensuring gender equality, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission also all contribute. We advocate the Security Council's stringent compliance with its mandate, and we reject attempts to sanction its intervention in issues covered by other bodies. What is inappropriate is the use of the Security Council for the advancement of contradictory concepts and approaches that do not enjoy broad international support.

We call for a focus on concrete measures to support women in armed conflict, including, inter alia, the

development of national action plans, the adoption of which should be contingent on situations related to armed conflict. In this regard, we are talking about a constructive, effective instrument, not yet another declaratory document. The adoption of action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) through checking boxes cannot serve as a criterion for the assessment of the effectiveness of policies for the advancement of women carried out in countries around the world.

We believe that, in discussions on the questions of women, peace and security, the Security Council still pays insufficient attention to the need to invest in science and health care and in social-protection and development as a whole. We embrace the premise set out by the presidency in the concept note (S/2022/743, annex) that investments in expansion of women's economic rights and opportunities make a tangible contribution to peace and security.

We have repeatedly called upon the membership of the Security Council to focus on issues of women's employment and property rights, including to land, access to credit and advanced technologies, as a necessary aspect of the development of States affected by armed conflict or those in post-conflict recovery. We see in this regard a clear flaw in the Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security. To date, the Group is not in a position to serve as a coordinating link in the work of the Security Council in this area. Its activity bears the hallmarks of clear politicization. Alas, the procedure for the adoption of documents fails to meet the requirements of transparency and agreement among members of the Security Council as a key condition for the maintenance of intergovernmental dialogue, and these flaws undoubtedly need to be addressed.

Turning to the activities of the Secretariat, in its work for the advancement of gender equality and women, peace and security, more women from developing countries need to be brought in, not those who know about situations on the ground through hearsay. We read with interest the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary General. We believe that they can be complemented with recommendations to reject the use of illegitimate, unilateral coercive measures, which have a very damaging impact on the situation of women and their family members. They deprive women of employment opportunities, education, social protection and the opportunity to raise children under normal conditions. For our part,

we intend to continue to contribute constructively to ensuring the advancement of women's position in society, the protection of their rights and their effective participation in all decision-making processes.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): At the outset, permit me to convey Ghana's appreciation to Gabon for its leadership and for prioritizing the discussion on women's contribution to peace, especially at a time when women and girls continue to face disproportionate threats in situations of armed conflict. Ghana is equally grateful to Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Bineta Diop, the African Union Special Envoy; and Ms. Zahra Nader for the perspectives they have brought to the open debate through their insightful briefings. We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2022/740) and for consistently highlighting the important role of women in securing peace. We reiterate his appeal to Member States to step up their efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda and, more specifically, to protect women human rights activists.

Despite the fact that the world is experiencing a reversal of generational gains in women's rights as a result of conflict, Ghana stands by the belief that the women and peace and security agenda, through resolution 1325 (2000), remains a strong framework that guides our collaborative efforts to build more peaceful and sustainable societies. While women in situations of armed conflict are indisputably victims, they can also be actors for change, as they are vital to the fight for peace. We therefore have to consider their unique roles and viewpoints if we are to be able to build safer communities and more resilient societies and shape local solutions for lasting peace. My delegation therefore welcomes the focus of today's high-level open debate on strengthening the resilience and leadership of women as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed conflicts. We believe that discussions around this theme will help us to work towards the common goal of increasing women's participation in all facets of society. I would now like to share with the Council some initiatives that Ghana is undertaking under the women and peace and security agenda.

As we have highlighted in recent Council debates, two years ago Ghana adopted its second national action plan for the period from 2020 to 2025, based on the need to address certain implementation gaps in the initial plan. The Government has disseminated the action

plan by translating it into the country's various local languages in order to create awareness and ensure that citizens understand and promote the women and peace and security agenda. In spite of the implementation barriers, Ghana is also committed to exercising leadership in the area of operationalizing the global women and peace and security agenda. It is against that backdrop that the Women, Peace and Security Institute of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre and other relevant stakeholders continue to train gender activists on peace and security issues and women as conflict mediators. Women are also being sensitized at the grassroots level on their roles in ensuring peaceful, resilient and democratic societies. Last month, to enhance our operationalization of our second national action plan, the Kofi Annan Centre trained a number of women and peace and security focal persons from Ghana and the wider region to better monitor and report on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa, using the Continental Results Framework, which the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council adopted in 2018.

Regarding the advancement of gender equality, especially in our security agencies, the Ghana Police Service has developed a gender policy to mainstream gender in its operations and administration. Our National Intelligence Bureau, of which women make up 52 per cent of the total staff, has established a gender office. The Government has increased the number of women on the governing board of the National Peace Council from one to three and on the Regional Peace Council from an average of one woman to a maximum of four. Ghana strongly believes that women bring unique perspectives to addressing issues and should therefore be adequately represented in decision-making processes.

As a HeForShe Male Champion and an AU Gender Champion, President Akufo-Addo of Ghana is committed to working to achieve gender equality and advance women's economic empowerment in our country. Cognizant of that important role, Ghana will co-chair the Africa Group Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network initiative in New York. The Network is expected to provide a platform for the Group of African States to discuss the women and peace and security agenda in collaboration with stakeholders and partners, with the aim of sharing experiences and best practices for women and peace and security in action on the African continent.

As one of the top 10 United Nations troop-contributing countries, Ghana is currently deploying 2,769 uniformed personnel, 15.6 per cent of whom are women, making Ghana the top contributor of uniformed women in military contingents to United Nations peacekeeping missions. We are proud of our female leadership contribution to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, whose Acting Deputy Force Commander is a female Ghanaian officer.

Ghana intends to undertake the following initiatives to advance the women and peace and security agenda and build women's resilience. The Government plans to intensify public education on laws and policies on human rights, gender issues, Sustainable Development Goal 5, resolution 1325 (2000) and our national framework on preventing and countering violent extremism, among other policies, in order to reduce the incidence of violations of women's rights. We also intend to conduct conflict-prevention training of traditional leaders, especially queen mothers in the northern parts of the country where conflict vulnerabilities exist, and to increase awareness on conflict resolution and peacebuilding among various women's groups so as to ensure peaceful and resilient communities.

In focusing on how United Nations entities and Member States can strengthen the leadership and resilience of women in peace processes in regions plagued by armed groups, it is important to acknowledge that women make up almost half of the world's population. It is therefore right that they should be full participants in the discussions that shape our present reality, as well as our future hopes, including in matters relating to international peace and security. To build their resilience and leadership, Ghana encourages Member States, as well as United Nations entities, to ensure the meaningful and full participation of women in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes and negotiations, as their participation can make an enormous difference in resolving conflicts. Ghana also calls on Member States, the United Nations and international policymakers to build the capacity of women to take up leadership roles in peace and security efforts.

As we are all aware, an increased presence of armed groups creates fear, anxiety and panic, which undermines quality of life, especially of women and children, and negatively affects their psychological health. It is essential that Member States commit to efforts to provide counselling services, mental and

psychosocial support while also creating opportunities and an enabling environment for women to live their full lives in peace.

In the regional context, we want to highlight the importance of national and regional networks of women in building a pool of women leaders. In that regard, we commend the African Women Leaders Network, which helps countries in Africa to elevate women to positions of leadership on the continent.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm the Government of Ghana's commitment to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and looks forward to working constructively with Council members to ensure that it remains at the forefront of our discussions as we work to achieve our collective goal of peace and security. It is our fervent hope that we will take pragmatic steps that can translate the women and peace and security agenda from rhetoric to concrete actions, ultimately leading to sustainable peace.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): We thank Gabon for convening the open debate on this important topic. I thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her insights. I also thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Sima Bahous, the African Union Special Envoy, Ms. Bineta Diop, and the civil society representative, Ms. Zahra Nader, for their briefings.

Women's empowerment and gender equality are prerequisites for building peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved unless violence against women is eliminated and their equal and meaningful participation in public life is promoted. Armed conflicts and terrorist attacks continue to have a devastating impact on the lives and dignity of women.

Resolution 1325 (2000) was pathbreaking and underlined women's participation as being key to resolving conflicts and securing peace. The women and peace and security agenda has transformative potential, but there are still challenges with regard to its realization. A lack of enabling environments, inequalities and discriminatory power structures inhibit effective conflict prevention and inclusive peace processes. The women and peace and security normative framework needs to be powered by action. Governments, the United Nations, regional organizations, civil society and other actors must implement their commitments to ensure

women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political processes and decision-making in order to promote an inclusive society.

One of the most important indicators for strengthening the roots of democracy, pluralism and fundamental rights is the extent to which women are included in the institutions of governance. The greater involvement of women in the higher echelons of decision-making considerably strengthens good governance — and more so in post-conflict situations. India has always called for advancing the democratic framework, the rule of law and institution-building in post-conflict situations, which is a *sine qua non* for advancing the women and peace and security agenda.

Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, India's development narrative has witnessed a transformational change, from women's development to women-led development and from exclusively Government-led to an inclusive multi-stakeholder governance model. We believe India's experiences on its women-centric development journey may be useful in our shared pursuit of enhancing women's resilience and leadership.

As the world's largest democracy, India offers a unique template for gender-sensitive governance. The Constitution of India ensures the participation of women in local governance by mandating that a minimum of 33 per cent of the total seats be reserved for women. More than 1.3 million elected women representatives, who constitute nearly 44 per cent of the total number of elected representatives, lead political decision-making at the grass-roots level.

Women's political power can be sustained only if accompanied by their socioeconomic advancement. In that context, I would like to share numerous good governance initiatives that we have taken to advance the holistic empowerment of women. We have leveraged digital technologies to provide greater access for women to finance, credit, technology and employment. Online bank accounts for more than 445 million people have been opened, of which more than 55 per cent are held by women. During the coronavirus disease pandemic, that initiative helped facilitate direct benefit transfers to almost 200 million women.

Through our micro-units development and refinance agency, the Government provides collateral-free loans to encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment. Approximately 70 per cent of the agency's beneficiaries are women-owned and women-operated enterprises.

Women have consequently become economically empowered and are providing employment to others as well.

To open up those economic opportunities, equal access to education is fundamental. A large number of women in India are obtaining education in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine. In fact, women have outnumbered men at medical schools in India for decades. India now has women in important positions of responsibility, not just in business but also in the areas of science and technology.

Women scientists have played a vital role in research and development in various fields, including the technology industry. In fact, women play an important part in furthering India's space research and missions. Approximately 27 per cent of the key executive positions in spearheading the Mars Orbiter Mission were led by Indian women.

In keeping with the Indian ethos of the world being one family and the Gandhian value of providing service to humanity, India has shared its developmental experiences and technical expertise with other countries across the globe. Our approach to development partnership was articulated by the Prime Minister of India in his address to the Parliament of Uganda in 2018, in which he said:

“Our development partnership will be guided by your priorities. It will be on terms that will be comfortable for you, that will liberate your potential and not constrain your future... We will build as much local capacity and create as many local opportunities as possible.”

Through our developmental cooperation, we have assisted partner countries in a range of fields with a direct bearing on women's progress and upliftment. One such encouraging example of powering up women's development in line with Sustainable Development Goal 7 is the Solar Mamas project. Under that initiative, more than 15,000 women from 83 countries, mostly from rural areas and with no formal academic training, received training in solar engineering and related skills in India, in a process that provided light and power to more than 1,200 villages and 500,000 people worldwide.

India has been an active participant in the deliberations on issues focusing on women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming in various United Nations bodies. India fully supports the

Secretary-General's call to action for the accelerated implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in implementing the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and actions taken under Action for Peacekeeping Plus priorities. We also welcome the Department of Peace Operations Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy and are committed to complying with it so that women's participation and their role in peacekeeping can be enhanced.

India supports the Secretary General's zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse. India was the first country to contribute to the Secretary-General's trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and also signed the voluntary compact on the issue in 2017.

The Prime Minister of India himself joined the circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations. India's contribution of a women's formed police unit to the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the first-ever women-only contingent in the history of United Nations peacekeeping operations, helped increase the participation of Liberian women in the security sector from 6 to 17 per cent. The Indian female engagement team in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has also been instrumental in enhancing local women's engagement in Goma in the eastern part of the country.

Terrorism and violent extremism continue to represent one of the biggest violators of human rights and threats to global peace and security. Needless to say, women and girls invariably suffer disproportionately. Terrorist attacks deserve strong condemnation and call for the collective adoption of a zero-tolerance approach. The Council must focus its attention on the consequences of terrorism for the rights of women. It must strive to effectively integrate women and peace and security considerations into sanctions regimes, including by listing those terrorist entities involved in violence against women in armed conflicts.

It is important that in conflict situations, the spotlight on women and minority issues be maintained. A case in point is Afghanistan, about which we heard a first-hand account earlier today. The world cannot look the other way while the rights of women and minorities are being trampled upon. There has been an increasing number of attempts to remove women from public life

in Afghanistan. We call for women and minorities to be included in Afghanistan's future and their rights to be fully respected, as affirmed in resolution 2593 (2021).

In conclusion, India is committed to engaging with all its partners to work towards mainstreaming women and peace and security considerations in order to build inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies. India's commitment to and experience of enhancing women's resilience and leadership across sectors will continue to guide our actions on taking the women and peace and security agenda forward.

The President (*spoke in French*): I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four 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 four minutes.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Baipo Temon (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, which enables us to share our experiences on today's topic on strengthening women's resilience and leadership in regions plagued by armed groups. I would also like to acknowledge the briefings by women's representatives from various organizations — Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Bineta Diop, Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission; and Ms. Zahra Nader, Editor-in-Chief of *Zan Times*. I thank them for the information that they have provided on such an important subject. I also thank you, Sir, for inviting me to share the experiences of the Central African Republic in this debate.

It should be noted that in armed conflicts, women and children are the first victims, while also taking account of the fact that in most countries in conflict women represent a majority of the population. It is therefore important for countries in conflict to work on strengthening women's leadership so that they can effectively participate in the process of restoring peace. We must applaud their remarkable resilience and ability to maintain and safeguard the economy during conflicts — women whose courage and actions, which reflect solidarity, can be a driving force for the resilience of an entire population.

It is regrettable and unacceptable that in 2022, women are still terribly exposed to violence, barbarism and the deprivation of their rights. Our battles to have our rights respected, which we commemorate on 8 March, have to some extent been in vain because the fate of women, their rights and respect for their bodies continues to be of true concern. Despite their remarkable determination, leadership and resilience, women and women's organizations and work are being undermined in countries in conflict. That is why silencing the guns, in Africa in particular but also in every region of the world, must be a priority for us all and part of our shared commitment for the sake of international peace and security. We must work harder for peace because our actions and decisions are compromising the future of the world and of women, who are the givers of life. Humankind has been placed in danger by the tyranny of Man with a capital M, by our persistent will to dominate and subjugate the other. I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his report (S/2022/740) and urge him to go further in taking concrete action to fight in solidarity against destabilization, terrorism and armed groups.

My country, the Central African Republic, has experienced a shocking number of crises and armed conflicts marked by unprecedented violence. The last two major conflicts in particular had especially violent consequences for women and children — the conflict in the early 2000s involving the Bayamoulué mercenaries from the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the leadership of Jean-Pierre Bemba, and that of 2013 involving the Séléka rebels and mercenaries who re-emerged in strength in 2020 under the name of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement. Those two major conflicts have undeniably left in their wake various forms of trauma caused by the extreme violence of the crimes that were committed — with systematic violence and sexual violations against women and children, crimes perpetrated from house to house with the sole intention of killing the men of the house and raping women and girls under the helpless gaze of their husbands and children, sometimes even forcing their sons to have sexual relations with their mothers or grandmothers.

The history of the Central African Republic is indeed a sad one, and one can wonder how the people of the country hold on and keep themselves from descending into chaos. In response, we must acknowledge the remarkable resilience of the women of the Central African Republic, who despite the

individual suffering they may have endured as a result of rape, the loss of their husbands and the murder of their children, have stayed standing, committed to refusing to render evil for evil and steadfastly remaining resilient in order to provide the children who survived human barbarity with a way to rise again. That sense of responsibility and self-sacrifice for one's family is a true driver of resilience for the women of the Central African Republic.

In the face of adversity and the consequences of armed conflicts that have created an exponential rise in the number of orphans, the women of my country have come together to improvise decent shelter for orphans by opening their homes or makeshift houses to accommodate them. They have dealt with the emergency, and over time, with the help of more experienced associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they have organized to provide a more adequate welcome and better care. They have come together and individually and collectively helped to carry out humanitarian work. In order to encourage their initiatives, some of the projects of the Central African Republic recovery plan have been entrusted to them, helping and promoting their work. Moreover, Central African civil society now has a good number of associations, including those whose members are women, women doctors, women lawyers and young women leaders.

The resilience of women in the Central African Republic correlates with leadership in terms not just of initiatives but of their capacity to resist pressure and take on positions of responsibility. Although our State has yet to appoint the number of women required to achieve the goal of gender parity, it should be acknowledged that it is a model in terms of women's promotion. During the time of our illustrious Emperor Bokassa, the Central African Republic saw the appointment of its first female Prime Minister, Elisabeth Domitien. In 2013, a woman — Catherine Samba-Panza — also served as interim President during the transition, at the height of a major crisis, a critical and extremely sensitive period during which at least 80 per cent of the country's territory was occupied by armed groups, which were not from the Central African Republic.

That trend of looking to women's leadership in the Central African Republic increased with our return to constitutional order, including in 2016 with the accession of Mr. Faustin Touadera to the presidency and the appointment of women to Government positions.

Women have held and continue to hold important positions, including in our Ministry of Defence, the diplomatic corps and the area of reconciliation. Even the position of President of the country's Constitutional Court is held by a woman. All of them are positions that have been entrusted to women in times of extreme tension and pressure.

We must also recognize that measures to promote resilience and women's leadership and ensure a sense of certainty, confidence and security have been implemented and continue to be implemented, including by a follow-up committee that is working on the issue of human trafficking, a problem that mainly affects women. The President has given the committee special attention and it is being overseen directly by the executive branch, with a Minister Councillor enlisted for the task. That exceptional and noteworthy resilience is also supported by the technical and financial partners of the Central African Government, placing them at the heart of the support system they provide to my country.

The Government of the Central African Republic welcomes the support provided to our women and calls attention to the vital importance of improving the structure of the NGOs and associations concerned to ensure that they are more effectively involved in the State's recovery and in overcoming challenges so that we have better social cohesion and coexistence, and not just in the political arena. We must encourage women to be bold with regard to principles of parity and to get more involved in decision-making bodies and in public affairs — all in a spirit of equity as predetermined by the concept of parity, which accordingly requires bringing together a sufficient number of Central African elites, especially young women.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the importance of adopting a fitting paradigm that consists in providing States that are constrained by armed groups with the means to promote women's meaningful leadership so that they can thrive in the political, economic, social, cultural and even personal arenas — in order to replace the current paradigm, which makes the support that the State needs conditional on the principle of equality instead of parity, which is based on equity — and in enabling women to assume their aspirational and deserved place so that their leadership can better benefit the public interest.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Gender, Family and Children of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Luseba (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your country, Gabon, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and to thank you for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security, on the theme "Strengthening women's resilience and leadership as a path to peace in regions plagued by armed groups".

I would like to pay a warm tribute to His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President and Head of State of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who spares no effort to re-establish the authority of the State throughout the country's territory and to establish peace in a peaceful manner, with the equal participation of women and men. The President of the Republic is known as a man of positive masculinity, owing to his efforts to ensure the effective inclusion of women in the management of the country's affairs.

My country spares no effort in investing in women, who are the key to achieving peace, by empowering them to be resilient so that they can contribute effectively to building lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire subregion. My Government also believes in the invaluable potential of promoting gender equality and women's leadership in order to achieve significant progress in the peace and development of our societies.

However, as far as the Democratic Republic of the Congo is concerned, the Government's substantial investments in recent years in improving the status of women have had little effect, owing to the resurgence of armed groups in the eastern part of my country. The support being provided to the terrorist groups that are devastating the lives of the women of my country is one factor preventing the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo has been quick to denounce such actions towards my country, which are in violation of international law.

Despite the factors I have mentioned that undermine the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in my country, some notable progress has been achieved. Since 2020, my country has been pursuing its second-generation action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the objective of which is to promote a secure environment and guarantee the equitable involvement of women, men and young

people in peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

That plan is in line with the strategic drivers of our national gender policy, which outlines my Government's priorities in that regard. We believe that new plan will enable us to guarantee women's safety and ensure that laws are respected and penalties strictly enforced with regard to combating violence — especially sexual violence — against women, young women and girls, which is one of the priorities of the Congolese Government.

The Ministry of Gender, Family and Children of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through its national secretariat for the coordination and follow-up of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), is currently supporting the country's provinces in contextualizing their provincial action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in order to allow each of them to be able to address priority security needs. That is how our country is working to decentralize the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Congolese women's capacity-building in mediation techniques has been strengthened, and there is a network of women peace mediators being built in the country. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has several peace mechanisms and initiatives that involve women, including a steering committee on the follow-up to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) at the national, provincial and local levels; a national secretariat for the coordination of and follow-up to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000); a network of women peacemakers that is currently being developed; and early warning and other mechanisms.

The normative framework currently in place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo provides an increasingly favourable context for women's empowerment, as demonstrated by the high level of women's political participation in our Government, in which women currently occupy 27 per cent of the key positions. Together with our Government, the Fondation Denise Nyakeru Tshisekedi recently created a reparations fund for survivors of sexual violence linked to armed conflict. The Government has also put in place integrated multisectoral centres to ensure care for victims of gender-based violence. Those are important decisions that will bring a smile to the faces of many women who have been humiliated by such despicable acts.

The state of siege that our President has decreed in the conflict zones in North Kivu and Ituri is one of the life-saving measures that is currently contributing to the protection of the population in general, especially women. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is currently chairing the regional follow-up mechanism for the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, which hosted its tenth summit in Kinshasa in February.

On that occasion, the Heads of State of the region endorsed the recommendations of the consultative committee on women and peace and security for the region aimed at promoting the effective participation of women in political life and peacebuilding processes and combating violence against women and girls. Currently, several reforms are under way in the police, army and judiciary. We aim to recruit more than 20,000 young women with a view to reinforcing their presence in those institutions by ensuring that they occupy leadership roles.

In conclusion, I recognize that there are several challenges to be addressed in order to ensure a better implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in our country. The work to be done is immense and requires the involvement of all stakeholders engaged in the search for peace and security at the national, regional and international levels. Our second-generation action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) deserves the support of all stakeholders in order to achieve the expected results.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Sumuvuori (Finland): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland. We commend Gabon for organizing today's important open debate.

In today's complex conflict situations, the work of human rights defenders is ever more dangerous. As we heard from the briefers this morning, threats, violence, harassment and hate speech against women peacebuilders and human rights defenders pose a serious threat to their lives and physical integrity, which can seriously disrupt their efforts for peace and conflict resolution. The Nordic countries echo the messages contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/740) and the open letter of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

It is the international community's responsibility to ensure an enabling environment in which women may exercise their right to participate in all aspects of public, social and political life. That includes concrete measures of protection from threats and violence. We simply must recognize the inextricable link between protection and participation. That is a rights issue but also a crucial step towards building inclusive and sustainable peace. Particular attention must be paid to those who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as women with disabilities.

The Security Council has shown leadership by providing many women human rights defenders and peacebuilders a platform for sharing their views, expertise and experiences. We call on Council members to incorporate those perspectives into the Council's work and conclusions, and to continue to provide women human rights defenders and peacebuilders visibility and appropriate support before, during and after briefing the Council. We call on Member States to adopt a zero-tolerance policy to address reprisals and to follow up with robust and systematic accountability measures against all perpetrators.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by crises and conflicts because of their gender. The Secretary-General's report (S/2022/740) documents a substantial increase in threats and attacks, including sexual and gender-based violence, targeting women in public life as a strategy to silence, humiliate and discredit them.

Yet women peacebuilders and women's rights organizations all over the world continue to show remarkable leadership, initiative and resilience. They play pivotal roles in efforts relating to conflict

prevention, conflict resolution, sustaining peace and achieving gender equality.

Continuous support to women's rights organizations is essential. In addition to political support that recognizes women's agency, that should include sufficient, predictable and sustainable funding to support grass-roots level action and capacity-building for women's networks.

By the year 2030, it is estimated that over 80 per cent of global poverty will be in countries suffering from violence and fragility. Tackling State fragility and placing emphasis on conflict prevention and peace mediation are ever more urgent. The Nordic countries regret that only 5 per cent of official development assistance to conflict-affected countries is dedicated to advancing gender equality. We — particularly Member States — must redouble our efforts when it comes to funding.

In conclusion, without women, we cannot achieve inclusive and sustainable peace. The Nordic countries commend the 11 current and former Security Council members who have signed the shared commitments on the women and peace and security agenda. We expect and call on the Security Council to take the lead in ensuring that the inclusion of women's perspectives and gender equality becomes a given in all discussions on peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): 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 Council, I intend to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.