

Ms. Sipiläinen (Finland):

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Mediation and its two co-Chairs first.

I would like to congratulate Sweden on organizing this very timely debate. We also welcome the fact that the Secretary-General has been present with us today.

The Group of Friends of Mediation brings together 44 United Nations States Members from various regions and eight international and regional organizations. With a broad representative capacity, the Group has made a significant contribution to the efforts to increase international awareness on mediation. In addition to its other activities, the Group of Friends of Mediation has initiated four General Assembly resolutions on mediation, which were adopted by consensus. The resolutions have contributed to strengthening the framework of mediation and the mediation-support functions of the United Nations, as well as the development of the mediation capacities of various mediation actors, while encouraging them to use the Guidance for Effective Mediation. The resolutions have also encouraged enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

The most recent General Assembly resolution (resolution 70/304) on mediation, adopted in September 2015, recognized the contribution made by the 2015 reviews of the United Nations peace and security architecture, in particular their attention to the importance of conflict prevention and sustaining peace, including the use of mediation. It acknowledged the good offices of the Secretary-General and the importance of seeking long-term, inclusive political solutions for sustaining peace.

Taking into account increasing humanitarian concerns and needs on the global level and specific to many regions, the 2016 ministerial breakfast meeting of the Group of Friends of Mediation provided an opportunity to discuss how best to respond to the call for global leadership to prevent and end conflicts, as highlighted in the report (A/71/353) of the Secretary-General on the Outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit. The Group of Friends of Mediation strongly believes that strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, and sustaining peace, is a cost-effective tool for the United Nations in its work towards peace and security. We also acknowledge the need to empower more women to serve as mediators. For that, sustained political support, coherence, cooperation, systematic efforts and adequate resources will be needed. The Group of Friends of Mediation welcomes the new Secretary-General's commitment to advance diplomacy for peace and stands ready to support his work and efforts that strengthen the role of mediation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and sustaining peace.

I would also like to make several remarks in my national capacity. Finland aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union.

Let me again thank Sweden for this debate, because the time to improve the United Nations ability to prevent conflicts more effectively is now. The Security Council, the Secretary-General and all Member States must grasp this momentum and turn it into concrete action. I am very pleased to see that the Secretary-General has already taken a proactive role in the area of conflict prevention and shown great initiative with his recent decisions on improving the United Nations performance.

The three reviews — on peace operations, peacebuilding, and women and peace and security — and their concrete implementation can truly transform the United Nations peace and security sector. Recommendations from the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see S/2015/446) continue to be valid and should be implemented without delay. Securing solid funding for both the primacy of politics and the sustaining peace agenda, including mediation and special political missions, are of high importance. Equally important is for Member States to support and contribute to peacekeeping, as it is a central element of the United Nations peace and security sector.

The Security Council, and the United Nations as a whole, needs to strengthen its own capacities to undertake prevention, including by conducting better horizon-scanning exercises, developing and making use of early-warning tools, better assessing the root causes of conflicts and addressing them in a timely manner, upholding universal human rights and leveraging sustainable development by implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Technology and innovations can help in that task. More efforts should also be invested in dialogue with those countries that are experiencing a fragile situation.

Finland wishes to see mediation as a tool for conflict prevention at the forefront of the United Nations work. Mediation and conflict prevention are the most cost-effective instruments to work towards peace. Finland's broad approach to mediation includes national dialogue and other formal and informal processes that contribute to more inclusive peace processes, and thereby to lasting solutions. We continue to support non-governmental actors, including religious and traditional leaders' engagement in peace processes. It is also time to recognize the value of United Nations special political missions. We, the Member States, should provide the political and financial support that they need.

We urge the Council and the Secretary-General to pay particular attention to the active role of women in conflict prevention. Women remain the single-greatest underutilized resource in more effective peacebuilding. Experience shows that empowering women and

supporting their full and active participation in peace-related, political and economic decision-making can lead to more inclusive and lasting agreements.

The Security Council holds a special responsibility in conflict prevention. One concrete line of action to that end would be the commitment of all Council members to support timely and decisive action by the Council to prevent or end mass atrocities and to refrain from the use of the veto in those situations.

Finland continues to stand ready to support the Council and Secretary-General Guterres in strengthening the mutual partnership, as well as making conflict prevention the United Nations top priority.