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*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of France, Mr. Delattre:**

I want to start by thanking Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, for their very insightful speeches, as well as Ms. Razia Sultana for her powerful speech, which should challenge us to reflect on this topic. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our full support to the Special Representative and her team of experts on the rule of law and sexual violence in conflict to implement this agenda, which is a priority for France.

At the outset, France aligns itself with the statements to be made by the observer of the European Union and by the representative Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. I will start by making several observations on issues which are alarming before proposing an overall response and several concrete ways to strengthen our collective action against these hateful acts. First, despite the Council's efforts, we remain confronted with an intolerable situation.

We are horrified by the number of cases of sexual violence mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/250), which still includes 51 listed parties, and by the sometimes systematic use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, a method of torture and a tool of terror. In the 19 situations examined in the report, sexual violence is also synonymous with restrictions on freedom of movement. That is the case, for example, in Syria, where sexual assaults are committed at crossing points and where sexual violence in besieged areas is described as systematic. The communities targeted are also forced to move, thereby finding themselves in new situations of vulnerability.

At times, progress achieved has been swept away, as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where an increase in violence has also led to an increase in verified cases. We condemn all those cases of violence with the greatest firmness. International justice must be able to convict the guilty. In that regard, we can highlight some progress, for example, the conviction last August of Colonel Becker for war crimes, including rape, committed in 2015 by his soldiers in Musenyi, South Kivu. We also note the end of equating rape with adultery in Afghanistan, the Sudan and Somalia.

However, a great deal of progress is still needed. For example, it is incomprehensible that no individual associated with Da'esh or Boko Haram has been convicted, even though we know those terrorist groups have used sexual violence as a tactic of war on a large scale. Furthermore, local and national justice

mechanisms, such as in Somalia or South Sudan, sometimes subject victims to a double punishment by forcing them to marry their aggressors.

The statement by Ms. Razia Sultana, as well as the findings from the Special Representative's visit, refer to the systematic use of sexual violence as a tactic of war in Burma to terrorize the Rohingya and make them flee. The Human Rights Council and the General Assembly have already condemned that sexual violence, and the Security Council must ensure that justice is served against the guilty parties and that adequate assistance is provided to the victims. We must also be extremely vigilant with regard to the situation in Kachin and Shan states. The intolerable often takes root in intolerance. Sexual violence is very often exacerbated or even incited by discrimination, including that linked to gender, inequality between women and men, prejudice and stereotypes.

Even after their liberation, victims are often pursued by those prejudices and face stigmatization. Sexual violence must therefore be fought throughout the process, from prevention to rehabilitation and reintegration. Victim support programmes, such as those established in Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, are essential. Social, legal and medical services, including psychological and social support, as well as dialogue within communities, are crucial. That response must be quick, as demonstrated by the situation in the Central African Republic, where men and boys are also victims.

This struggle must also be part of a comprehensive response to all the challenges that societies pose to the rights of women. It is all the more effective when women's participation in decision-making is assured and when real attention is paid to their economic and social emancipation. Sexual violence jeopardizes women's economic and social process, and many are forced to relinquish their right to land ownership, for example. Such violence is also used as a threat to prevent them from participating in politics.

France will therefore continue to call for a comprehensive response through the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, as it did during the debate on 27 October 2017 (see S/PV.8079), under its presidency of the Security Council. It is not enough to be outraged; we must act. Today's excellent concept note (S/2018/311, annex) has inspired us to reflect on prevention. Effectively combating impunity is the best method of prevention. Every effort must be made to ensure that the perpetrators of sexual violence are tried by competent national courts and, failing that, by international criminal courts, including the International Criminal Court.

When judicial proceedings are impossible in the short term, we must ensure that mechanisms are in place to document crimes and enable proceedings at a later stage. The Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and the International, Independent and Impartial Mechanism can play that indispensable role. In addition, providing support to national authorities must go hand in hand with protecting civil society actors who work each day to combat sexual violence and assist victims, and who are themselves often threatened.

The Council can now make its response more specific and effective.

First, it can include sexual violence as a designation criterion, directly or indirectly, in all sanctions regimes. It must have genuine recourse to that tool. I propose that we work together to ensure that it is employed.

Next, we must ensure that peacekeeping operations have the necessary capacity to implement their mandates. Protecting women is not optional; it is an absolute necessity that must be firmly anchored at the centre of operations. In that regard, the posts of gender advisers and women's protection advisers are crucial and must be preserved.

Lastly, the Council must be able to address the issue of sexual violence in conflict more regularly — for example, by issuing press statements when instances of sexual violence are confirmed in theatres of conflict. Several United Nations initiatives should be commended and supported, such as UN-Women and Justice Rapid Response, which comprise a pool of experts to provide support to inquiry mechanisms.

On a broader scale, we commend the zero-tolerance policy of the Secretary-General with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The United Nations must set an example, and the "UN Too" movement, which mirrors the Me Too movement, opens the door for concrete responses. As for France, to mention a few examples, we have established a whistle-blowing unit and training courses on various types of sexual violence for soldiers ahead of their deployment, as well as for magistrates.

Last year, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs financed civil society projects to combat violence against women in Yemen and Nigeria, following similar initiatives in the Central African Republic, Cameroon and Lebanon. It is now funding the establishment of a holistic treatment centre for victims of sexual violence in the Central African Republic.

The international community, in particular the Council, must redouble its efforts in response to such odious and vile acts. This is one of France's top priorities, including within the context of its feminist diplomacy. My country will continue to demonstrate the utmost respect for that call. As President Emmanuel Macron recalled, that requirement is the essence of our dignity. More than ever, France is committed and determined to act.