

Mr. Hultqvist (Sweden): I first wish to thank Mr. Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their excellent introductions and briefings.

Of all the evil acts that take place in conflict settings, sexual violence may be the one that casts the longest shadow. The lives of victims are changed forever. Besides the physical scars that the victims bear, they will carry the hidden trauma and stigma for the rest of their lives. We can see that the use of sexual violence in conflicts destroys societies, families and community structures, as its goal is to dominate and control the society concerned. Therefore, every effort must be taken to end sexual violence in conflict, and I thank Uruguay for organizing this open debate on the topic.

We would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General and the acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for their insightful and, sadly, very troubling accounts of sexual violence in conflict settings.

Let me also thank Ms. Bangura, the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her strong leadership during her tenure, and welcome the incoming Special Representative, Ms. Patten. She has our strong support. We also express our thanks to the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. Sexual violence in any situation is a crime, but conflict-related sexual violence is also a core security challenge that must be kept on the Council's agenda. Why? Because the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism has not stopped. On the contrary, sexual violence, human trafficking and the exploitation of vulnerable persons through modern slavery in the midst of migration are growing trends worldwide.

We must move from expressing outrage to taking decisive action. The following are some concrete measures that the Security Council and each Member State can undertake.

First, they can apply a comprehensive rights-based approach focused on the needs and experiences of victims. Ensuring human rights, especially the right to freedom from violence and to sexual and reproductive health and rights, remains essential. Sexual violence in all its forms is prohibited in armed conflict under international humanitarian law. Perpetrators must be held accountable.

Secondly, they can make conflict-related sexual violence a priority issue in monitoring the implementation of Security Council mandates. To that end, we need improved data, including sex-disaggregated statistics, as well as accurate accounts. That is why we strongly welcome briefings by civil society to the Council, such as that made by Ms. Mina Jaf today. We also welcome the use of conclusions submitted by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the summaries of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security.

Thirdly, the Council and Member States can use all of the Council's tools to combat sexual violence in conflict, including sanctions. Resolution 2339 (2017) on the Central African Republic introduced the first-ever separate designation criteria on conflict-related sexual

violence in a sanctions regime. Let us work to include similar criteria in all relevant sanctions regimes.

Fourthly, the numbers of women peacekeepers, police and correction officers should be increased. The evidence for their greater inclusion is compelling. With more female peacekeepers and female police officers we reach the whole population in a conflict area and become more efficient in operations. There is a clear need for more female leaders in executive positions. Sweden is working to meet the target of 15 per cent women military observers and staff officers in its contingents by December 2017. Sweden actively promotes the agenda for women and peace and security and has had a national action plan in place for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) since 2006. In its work Sweden seeks to actively ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into all international operations in conflict and post-conflict countries. That ambition must be integrated into all peace and security efforts.

Women and peace and security is an integral part of pre-deployment preparations for all Swedish troops, and all deployed contingents have specially trained gender advisers. Furthermore, the United Nations must be trusted in order to be effective. That is why, in this context, it is key to implement expeditiously the Secretary-General's approach to eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse committed by men and women working for the United Nations.

Fifthly, a gender perspective should be integrated throughout counter-terrorism work in line with Security Council resolution 2242 (2015). Sexual violence, whether it is politically or religiously motivated, is totally unacceptable in any situation and is a crime. In addition, resolution 2331 (2016) highlights that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, and are used as a tactic of terrorism.

Clear political leadership is needed at all levels to change norms in society. It can encourage female victims of sexual violence to speak out. Indeed, we have seen only the tip of the iceberg. Low levels of reporting are a sign of stigma and failed systems. High numbers are a step in the right direction towards tackling the problem. It is important that we break the silence regarding sexual violence in conflict, thereby making it visible and not shameful, and making it part of peace negotiations, reconciliation and transitional justice.

Real leadership and engagement must also come from political leaders, military commanders, elders, judges, community leaders, teachers and peer-to-peer counsellors. I am proud to be a Minister in a feminist Government. All leaders have a duty to challenge sexist views and violent behaviour and attitudes towards women and children. The responsibility to address and speak up is greater for those of us in male-dominated sectors, such as defence and security. We are working actively within the Swedish Armed Forces to educate our own troops as well as troops from other countries. We are ready to share our experiences.

We cannot spare any effort in combating these evil acts. Only by shining a light on this issue can we lift the long shadow of sexual violence in conflict for the survivors and prevent another generation from falling victim. We all can, and must, improve.