

**Security Council**

Seventy-third year

8234th meeting

Monday, 16 April 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional***Statement by the Representative of Italy, Mr. Biagini:**

At the outset I would like to commend the Peruvian presidency for convening today's debate, in particular for the angle it has chosen. I also thank the briefers for their insightful and informative contributions.

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and with that by delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Our concerns about the use of sexual and gender-based violence have deepened for two reasons: first, the widespread and systematic use of sexual violence by terrorists and violent extremist groups and, secondly, the increased vulnerability of migrants, in particular women and girls, to trafficking for the purposes of sexual and other forms of exploitation. Women and girls fleeing conflict must be afforded safe passage and protection, including from sexual and gender-based violence, while in transit and at their final destinations. It is for those reasons that last year Italy promoted the adoption by the Council of resolution 2388 (2017), which further explored the nexus between trafficking in persons and conflict-related sexual violence, as outlined in resolutions 2242 (2015) and 2331 (2016), with a special focus on the trafficking of children in conflict situations. We encourage the Security Council to continue to monitor those issues and ensure follow-up to those resolutions.

Conflict-related sexual violence can be prevented and more effectively addressed through the empowerment of women, gender equality and accountability for the crimes perpetrated. First, empowering women is key to any strategy that aims to help women take control of their lives and prevent them from falling prey to sexual violence in conflict. In keeping with the Secretary-General's commitment to women's leadership and gender equality, as a vital element of its prevention agenda Italy launched the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network. As we all know, the Mediterranean region, key to international peace and security, is currently facing several threats, including violent extremism and transnational organized crime, human trafficking and humanitarian emergencies.

In that environment, women can help countries prevent conflicts and strengthen national reconciliation processes by ensuring a gender and inclusive perspective on issues, such as security, justice and governance, which are often the root causes of violent conflicts. The goal of the Network is to increase the number of women involved in peacemaking efforts and facilitate the appointment of women

mediators and special envoys at the local and international level, in particular in the Mediterranean region.

With regard to accountability, prevention fails if there are no consequences for sexual and gender-based violence. At the national level we must assist Governments in strengthening accountability for such crimes. That is the approach we are taking, for example, with the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units in Vicenza, which provides high quality training and specialized courses for peacekeepers on the prevention and investigation of sexual and gender-based violence. At the global level, the Statute of the International Criminal Court expressly lists various forms of sexual and gender-based crimes as underlying acts of both crimes against humanity and war crimes. In that regard, we welcome the recent surrender of Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud, wanted for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Mali, including rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery. If properly supported, including by the Council, justice can become a relevant deterrent for human rights violations.

The Council can also do so by imposing targeted sanctions against individuals who have committed sexual violence. For example, in January 2017 sexual and gender-based violence was included as a standalone designation criterion in the renewal of sanctions in the Central African Republic. The Security Council could certainly deter such crimes by imposing targeted sanctions. However, it is necessary to ensure that sanctions are effectively implemented in order to increase the cost of allowing or using sexual violence in conflict. Only when the cost of the weapon of sexual violence becomes visibly more expensive to its perpetrators will there be a significant step towards the eradication and prevention of the scourge.