

**Mrs. Pucarinho** (Portugal): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the Uruguayan presidency of the Security Council for convening today's open debate on sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism, which is indeed a most pressing issue. I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their very comprehensive presentations this morning.

Portugal aligns itself with the statement earlier delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union, and I would like to add some comments in my national capacity.

We welcome the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/249), which has given us very important information on the implementation of the Council's resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence and its substantial recommendations for dealing with that scourge. Almost 17 years ago, the Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, but despite all our efforts and achievements so far, I think we all agree that much remains to be done. Portugal considers it to be extremely important to ensure that the Security Council continues to address concerns relating to the agenda on women and peace and security, which is a critical yet under-utilized tool for preventing conflict and shaping more effective responses to today's complex crises.

As discussed in the Secretary-General's report, in 2016 sexual violence, including widespread incidents of rape, continued to be employed as a tactic of war. That is intolerable. The report also illustrates the nexus that exists between trafficking in persons and conflict-related sexual violence, which is especially worrying where it relates to the cases of women and girls who have been ostracized after being released from violent extremist groups and have subsequently fallen victims to sex trafficking.

Portugal fully agrees with the view of the Secretary-General that more must be done to prevent sexual violence in conflict. Moreover, we need to ensure the following: victims of violence, including sexual violence, should be able to effectively enjoy the right to protection and reparation; the perpetrators should be punished; and support for community-mobilization campaigns should be designed to help shift the stigma of sexual violence from the victims to the perpetrators. We would like once again to encourage States and international organizations to develop action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and to include there in measures to address specifically sexual violence in conflict.

Portugal adopted its first national action plan in 2009. A second one, currently in force, was adopted in 2014. It includes several measures addressing the scourge of sexual violence in conflict, notably training programmes on gender equality and violence against women and young women, including sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings, for executive and technical staff in the justice sector and for members of the armed forces and the security forces; and the same programmes are also in place for judicial personnel and members of the armed forces and security forces assigned to international missions for the promotion and maintenance of peace and security.

We must also take into account the essential role played by civil-society organizations, which often complement the work done by military, security and civilian personnel in conflict and post-conflict settings and in emergency situations. They often play a crucial role in preventing and reporting crimes and in alerting the

international community to such crimes, in restoring the internal order of the States and may also be crucial in supporting the reconstruction of countries and helping the population. Working in close collaboration with those organizations is therefore indispensable, in our view, to enhance the results we are seeking to achieve.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the attention of the Council to the potential of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, which supports the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). It is a most relevant initiative by Spain, which Portugal fully supports. Portugal is also a proud member of that group.