

Ms. Safou (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to welcome the accession of your country, France, to the presidency of the Security Council and to congratulate you for the great skill with which you have led the work of the Council during this month of October. I would also like to thank you for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security, a theme that reflects the tragedy that many women around the world endure, particularly certain women in the eastern and the central parts of my country.

I pay well-earned tribute to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General, for his assiduous efforts aimed at seeking peace in my country. I also thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for the support UN-Women has given to the women of the Democratic Republic of Congo. I also welcome the presence of Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie.

My country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been affected by many years of armed conflict, with nefarious repercussions, particularly for women and children, has made a firm commitment to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. This debate affords us an opportunity to briefly outline the efforts undertaken by my Government to address this situation — and to implement resolution 1325 (2000) — which we have done by adopting a plan of action with 10 priority thrusts in 2013.

The plan of action is currently under participatory and inclusive review with significant collaboration from civil society at both the national and international levels, in particular with the participation of the Cordaid Foundation, Diakonia Sweden and UN-Women. The Government has undertaken an assessment of the current plan of action so as to identify its strengths and weaknesses and to collect statistical data from 10 provinces, while awaiting data from the remaining provinces, with a view to reaching more women at the local level.

It is worth noting that the implementation of the national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) has led in gender-mainstreaming in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as capacity-building for women leaders in negotiation and mediation in terms of influencing decision-making in times of crisis and post-conflict periods in the Democratic Republic of Congo. More than 500 women leaders and prominent local individuals have seen their capacities strengthened in the areas of conflict resolution and notions of gender. That has enabled them to contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in provinces mired in ethnic conflict.

It should be noted that the Democratic Republic of Congo has undertaken a review of our national strategy to combat sexual and gender-based violence, adopted an armed forces action plan and signed the joint compact between the Government and the United Nations on the fight against sexual violence in conflict. Through the compact, our Government has reaffirmed its commitment to shoring up a zero-tolerance policy for crimes of sexual violence and to adopting measures to fight impunity by initiating proceedings against perpetrators. Along those lines,

from July to December 2014, 135 judicial sentences were handed down, punishing high-level military and police officers, and in 2016 the military justice system rendered 111 decisions against perpetrators of sexual violence.

At the security level, I would like to commend the determination of the Head of State, Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, to implement the relevant provisions of resolution 1325 (2000), in particular by the promotion to rank and raising to high-level positions of nine women army brigadier generals and a number of female senior officers. It is worth mentioning the appointment of 20 women to active duty in the battalion of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, which operated in the Central African Republic in connection with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. I cannot conclude without noting that my country rightly appreciates the support given to it by the United Nations and the international community.