

**Mr. Munir (Pakistan):** We thank the French presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's very important meeting on realizing the promises of the women and peace and security agenda.

We thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the representatives of non-governmental organizations for their briefings this morning.

The past couple of decades have witnessed a sharp increase in the number of conflicts. Situations of chronic instability, violence, armed conflict and wars continue to affect women and girls disproportionately. From sexual violence to sexual exploitation and abuse inflicted by terrorist organizations and parties to the conflict, women carry a disproportionate burden of physical and psychological trauma during conflicts. What is worse is that the exploitation of women and girls is not an incidental by-product of conflict. It is an instrument widely employed to humiliate and terrorize civilians. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/861), sexual violence continues to be employed as a tactic of war, with widespread and strategic rapes, including mass rapes, allegedly committed by several parties to armed conflicts. But to their credit, that has not held women back. Across the globe, they have been willing and able to share the burden of peacebuilding, peacemaking and conflict prevention.

The Security Council and its global efforts to end that dehumanizing practice have played a part in their endeavour. The landmark resolution 1325 (2000) both ushered in and institutionalized a new focus on women in conflict, moving their participation and rights to the front and centre of the political debate. Although challenges remain daunting and many new protection crises continue to emerge, our collective resolve to stamp out the scourge provides a reason for hope. In that regard, I would like to emphasize four specific points.

First, the Security Council, as the primary body tasked with maintaining peace and security, should focus on the root causes of conflict to remove the ground where such crimes breed. Secondly, the United Nations should play its unique role in enhancing cooperation and coordination with the relevant bodies to help secure for women their rightful place at the table. Thirdly, national Governments bear the primary responsibility for women's safety and rights. The international community should support countries concerned in their efforts to safeguard women's rights and provide assistance in that regard. Strengthening the capacity of national institutions is critical to that endeavour and UN-Women can play a major role. Fourthly, gender perspectives should be fully integrated into the peacebuilding paradigm to reinforce the protection environment. That would entail not only the greater participation of women in peacekeeping mandates, but also an enhanced role of women in peace accords and in the stabilization and reconstruction phases of postconflict rehabilitation.

We fully support the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse. Pakistan was among the first batch of countries to sign the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on the subject. We have also contributed to the Trust Fund for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

In conclusion, let me recall that multidimensional peacekeeping missions with protection mandates play a key role in combating violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations. As a leading troop-contributing country, Pakistan remains fully committed to that cause.