

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): I wish to thank you very much, Madam President, for having initiated the present open debate and providing an excellent concept note (S/2017/889, annex). We thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his comprehensive report of 16 October (S/2017/861), and we recognize and support the consistency of the policy recommendations and conclusions contained in the report with the overall priorities and reform agenda of the Secretary-General.

At such an important stocktaking open debate of the Security Council on the past 17 years of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda of the United Nations, Armenia reiterates its full commitment to the resolute pursuit of such a transformative agenda and the consistent strengthening of the link between the empowerment of women and the sustainability of peace and development at the national, regional and international levels. At the national level, the implementation of our strategic action plan on gender policy and on combating gender-based violence is a continuous works in progress.

Shortly, my Government will be presenting to the Parliament a draft law on the prevention of domestic violence and the protection of victims. Our national laws and provisions of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men and identifying and assisting victims of trafficking and human exploitation, as well as numerous other legal and normative acts, remain important instruments for the promotion of gender equality and the protection of the rights of women. Gender equality and the empowerment of women received considerable prominence in Armenia's overall national strategy and action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Following the adoption of a new Constitution in 2015 and the new electoral code in 2016, the quota for women's representation in elected bodies has been raised to 25 per cent from 20 per cent. There is an aim to gradually increase that figure to 30 per cent by 2021. Presently, the representation of women in our national Parliament stands at nearly 20 per cent, which is a considerable increase from the previous level of 11 per cent. Promoting gender balance in the judiciary represents another important priority for Armenia. As a result of the implementation of our respective national action plan, the number of female judges has reached 25 per cent.

The empowerment of women and the promotion of their rights represent an important agenda in Armenia's work within regional and international bodies. Presently, the Government is considering modalities for setting up a working group for the implementation of Armenia's international commitments, including those stemming from the national report on Beijing + 20 and its concluding observations. Furthermore, domestic procedures have been launched to sign the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

I am also glad to inform the Council about the setting up of an inter-agency working group for the elaboration of a national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), with a view to its adoption in 2018. In 2015 and 2016, the Minister of Defence of Armenia, in

collaboration with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund, initiated and conducted workshops on the national implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The publication in 2016 of a reference book on women and the army, as well as the elaboration of a concept note and a draft action plan that is to be approved soon by the Minister of Defence concerning women's rights and equal opportunities in the field of defence, are important building blocks in Armenia's national efforts for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

In all of our work, the Government of Armenia relies heavily on the strong engagement, cooperation and contributions of its very vibrant civil society organizations, particularly those dealing with issues of women. We strongly commend and thank our civil society activists for their important work and commitment.

We support the Secretary-General's observations about the need to elevate the women and peace and security agenda to systemic, large-scale, transformative programmes and approaches to preventing conflict and sustaining peace. Overall, that resonates strongly with the Secretary-General's concept of placing prevention at the heart of the actions of the United Nations — a concept that we support. In that respect, the empowerment of women, the promotion and protection of women's rights in general and, in particular, the women and peace and security agenda should not be viewed as a standalone agenda. Rather, it should be firmly viewed as an indispensable and integral part of the broader objective of securing durable solutions to crisis situations and addressing the root causes of violence and conflicts. Gender-based vulnerability often represents an exacerbating factor in targeting groups on the grounds of their broader identities, such as, for example, national, ethnic, religious or racial identities. The reinforced emphasis on the promotion and protection of all human rights, the strengthening of national institutions to that end and reinforced international cooperation to promote the human rights agenda remain significant objectives, both at national and international levels.

In conclusion, Armenia particularly underlines the role of women in establishing an environment conducive to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and promoting confidence-building among conflicting parties. We recognize the significance of the role of civil society organizations, in particular women-led organizations, for that purpose. Armenia consistently emphasizes the importance of dialogue and confidence-building in the context of the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. However, meaningful effort to promote such dialogue and confidence-building measures is considerably undermined by persistently flaring hate speech, intolerance, xenophobia and ethnic profiling of Armenians. The glorification of hate crimes, especially encouraged by the political leadership in the neighbouring States, as well as violence and the imprisonment of human rights defenders, including women.

Armenia remains firmly committed to the peace process and reiterates its deep appreciation for the support of the international community, of the Council and of the Secretary-General for the efforts of the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe. In the context of the present debate, we recognize and underline the significant role of women as catalysts for sustainable peace