

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): At the outset, I wish to thank the French presidency for having organized this important debate. I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to all of our briefers for their important, exhaustive and passionate contributions.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda has become an essential pillar and a necessary tool in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and humanitarian action. The statements delivered today clearly attest to the fact that the women and peace and security discourse — namely, the announcement of women's participation in leadership in peace and security processes — is also proving to be an important entry point for fostering dialogue with countries in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The 2015 global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) recognized that the meaningful participation of women is crucial to the operational effectiveness, success and sustainability of peace and security processes. The evidence of that is increasingly solid and undeniable, as shown by the Secretary-General in his latest report on women and peace and security (S/2017/861). Nonetheless, the perspective and voices of women, including at the grassroots level, often go unheard, since they are still rarely included in peace negotiations. The exclusion of women from those processes directly and negatively impacts the sustainability of peace agreements, as well as the quality of democracy, the development of inclusive societies and respect for human rights.

And still, in many countries around the world, women continue to be sexually exploited, trafficked, subjected to female genital mutilation and forced marriages. We warmly welcome the gender parity strategy recently launched by the Secretary-General, as we believe that the United Nations has to lead by example and be a standard-setting Organization. Unfortunately, according to some studies, at the current rate, it will take around 170 years to achieve gender parity worldwide. This is why we welcome your call, Mr. President, to Member States at this year's open debate to present concrete actions and share best practices aimed at closing implementation gaps and accelerating progress. We encourage the adoption of this as a common practice at future open debates.

In our view, the implementation of the whole women and peace and security agenda is closely linked to the strengthening of women's meaningful participation in the life of their communities, in particular throughout the peace process cycle. Let me provide some concrete examples.

First, in line with the Secretary-General's commitment to women's leadership and gender equality as a vital element of his prevention agenda, I am very proud to announce that the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network was launched yesterday in Rome. The aim of the Network is twofold: prevention and mediation, on the one hand, and capacity-building on the other.

In the Mediterranean region issues of migration combine with human trafficking, transnational organized crime, increasing violent extremism, refugees and humanitarian emergencies. In such

a context, women can help countries prevent conflicts and strengthen national reconciliation processes by ensuring a gendered and inclusive perspective on issues of security, justice and governance, which are often the root causes of violent conflicts. The Network is also a concrete way for women to acquire and develop further capacity and expertise to successfully contribute to mediation efforts as official United Nations mediators or mediation experts.

The launch was possible thanks to the fact that, for the first time, our national action plan on women, peace and security was granted a financial contribution enhanced by the Italian Parliament. We encourage all Member States to properly finance their national action plans, since the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda demands change, and no real change is possible without the necessary financial resources.

Secondly, Italy believes that women's empowerment, gender equality and the protection of women's rights are intrinsic to sustainable development and conflict prevention. Therefore, to step up efforts in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, in 2017 my country has committed approximately \$10 million to supporting a number of projects led by UN-Women in Africa, the Middle East and Central America in the areas of both women's empowerment and engagement in peace and security processes. That reflects our belief that the efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are mutually reinforcing.

Thirdly, and finally, we encourage the United Nations to use in a more consistent way the women and peace and security discourse with countries in conflict and post-conflict situations. In that regard, we welcome the joint high-level mission conducted by the United Nations with the African Union last July in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which had a strong women and peace and security angle focused on women's meaningful participation in peace, security and development. We encourage the United Nations to continue along this path and to organize similar missions in other countries by working in synergy with regional and subregional organizations and initiatives, such as women mediators' networks.

I want to stress that when we talk about women's participation it is not only a question of numbers, it is a question of ensuring their meaningful participation in conflict prevention, mediation and preventive diplomacy processes. The meaningful participation of women is indisputably an accelerator for peace that will lead to higher peace dividends in dispute settlements. And if we really do care about peace, making full use of their potential is a smart thing to do.

Allow me to conclude by recalling three pivotal moments that we experienced this year in the Security Council. One was the Arria Formula meeting we organized two weeks ago, co-hosted with France, Sweden and Uruguay, on school attacks. We also recall the incredible participation of Joy Bishara in that event and the message of pride and bravery that she conveyed to all of us. I also want to recall the Council's two missions in Africa, one in the Lake Chad basin and the other, as was remembered by the Ambassador of Bolivia, some weeks ago in the Sahel region.

The meeting that we had with the female members of parliament and representatives of civil society and in the refugee camps was by far the most important meeting that we had in that mission.