

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): Namibia welcomes the Security Council's decision to once again discuss the issue of women and peace and security as a standing agenda item. We are encouraged by the overwhelming support shown by Member States as evidenced in the large number of participants.

My delegation also aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security.

We would like to reiterate that Namibia, as the initiator of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, remains committed to its implementation. We look forward to a time when women's contributions to peace processes are valued and respected equally.

In Namibia, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) falls within the national gender policy framework, which includes a cluster on gender, peacebuilding, conflict resolution and natural disaster management. Its overarching objective is to increase and strengthen women's participation in conflict resolution, promote women's contribution to peacebuilding and involve women in natural disaster management, an emerging issue that resolution 1325 (2000) overlooked. The reviewed gender policy is complemented by other national policies aimed at mainstreaming gender and holding discussions on placing women on par with men, including in the Affirmative Action Act, the Inheritance Act and the Communal Land Act, among others.

Those policies have ensured that Namibia has been deploying women to all peacekeeping missions and has had to date one of the largest female police contingents at the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the Sudan. We also had a women police contingent in Liberia. When one of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, Lesotho, faced a political impasse last year, the SADC police contingent to that country was led by a Namibian woman who had previously served in Darfur. In addition, Namibia has seconded a woman to the Office of the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security.

It is our belief that the significant presence of women peacekeepers in conflict and post-conflict areas has an added advantage of creating safer spaces for girls and women who have suffered sexual violence. Studies conducted by the United Nations on support for resolution 1325 (2000) have demonstrated that female soldiers often face different cultural restrictions than their male counterparts and are able to gain information from women and children. That ability to gain the trust of local populations should be considered a vital component of any peacekeeping operation.

The challenges to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) are many, and include a lack of awareness of the agenda, a lack of political will, compounded by entrenched biases not to promote women to positions of power, and a lack of capacity-building and financing for the agenda. Another challenge is simply cultural and traditional norms that serve to promote men to positions of power, while questioning the ability of women to lead, particularly in traditionally

male fields such as the police, defence services and peacekeeping. Since those traditional norms are pushed by both women and men, we must encourage a culture in which both men and women believe it is vital to support the rise of women to positions of leadership.

The inclusion of women in early-warning, mediation and conflict resolution efforts are key to ensuring a successful peace and security agenda. Gender-specific provisions also need to be included in peace agreements. Much progress is still to be made in that, as in 2016 only half of peace agreements adopted contained gender-specific provisions.

We must also do more to prevent and condemn sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. The role of peacekeepers is to protect civilians, not cause more harm or distress. In that regard, Namibia signed the voluntary compact against sexual exploitation and abuse, during the General Assembly high-level week in September, and we encourage others to do the same.

Namibia urges Member States to commit to nominating women for top-level positions in international and regional peace and security organizations. At the African Union, the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop, has been raising this matter in many forums. We encourage other regional and subregional organizations to nominate women, peace and security envoys. We urge troop- and police-contributing countries to identify and deploy female military experts in peacekeeping missions. Finally, we demand greater consideration of the women and peace and security agenda in the working procedures of the Security Council, both country-specific and thematic.