

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): My delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

We wish to thank you, Madam President, as well as France for taking the leadership in organizing this annual debate on women and peace and security. It is indeed crucial that the Security Council continue to systematically and consistently advance a holistic women and peace and security agenda in its work and decision-making, and we certainly do not take it for granted that 17 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we still have points to focus on. Indeed, we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that the resolution and our work really matter and that it is implemented in a manner that makes a difference for the people on the ground. I would like to thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, for her briefing, and the other briefers for their very insightful, very practical and extremely interesting contributions to today's debate. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the significance of UN-Women and the importance that this entity plays in making sure that there is stronger engagement with the Member States, and with the Security Council in particular.

Furthermore, we would like to commend the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/861), but, more important, for his strong commitment and leadership related not only to the issue of gender parity but also specifically to the women and peace and security agenda, pursuant to the recommendations and commitments made at the 2015 high-level review, in the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and in resolution 2242 (2015). We welcome and strongly support the Secretary-General's vision of peace and security grounded in long-term conflict prevention, inclusivity and gender equality, as well as his victim centred approach to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. I would add that we were very happy to see that the Secretary-General decided to spend United Nations Day with people on the ground, in particular in the Central African Republic, where these issues are perhaps more important than in other parts of the world. That focus is certainly very much appreciated.

I would like to welcome the practical innovations at the level of the Security Council, such as the convening of experts in the Informal Expert Group and the inclusion of women civil-society representatives in country-specific briefings. At the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly, new initiatives on gender parity and conflict prevention were launched in which my country also participated. The second meeting of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network took place in September with an important focus on conflict prevention, the security sector and its integration in national action plans and national strategies on women, peace and security. Also, the heads of the armed forces of approximately 100 Member States met at the United Nations this year to discuss the issue of increasing the number of female peacekeepers and integrating the gender perspective.

As the French delegation stated in its concept note (S/2017/889, annex), despite the substantial efforts undertaken to implement the women and peace and security agenda and the progress that has been made in the past 17 years, critical challenges remain, ranging from increasing the

number of women at the highest levels of decision-making to ending impunity for gender-based violence. Moreover, gender-responsive and protective environments for women remain lacking, and women, peace and security efforts continue to be unpredictably undervalued and underfunded. These are areas where we believe we need to further enhance our concerted efforts.

We are of the view that four of the themes of the women and peace and security agenda — participation, conflict prevention, protection, and relief and recovery — need accelerated attention and action by the United Nations and its Member States. I should also like to highlight other critical areas, such as disarmament, efforts to create greater space for women's civil-society organizations and the need for stronger information and analyses on women, peace and security. The current refugee challenges create specific environments for women, and further action is necessary to address women's lives in those conditions. Last but not least, it is of the utmost importance that we collectively make progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDGs 5 and 16, while recognizing gender equality and peaceful, just and inclusive societies as global development priorities.

Slovakia is currently in the process of drawing up its national action plan on women, peace and security. Meanwhile, the Government continues to promote all national efforts aimed at strengthening the role of women in society through the national gender equality strategy for the period 2014-2019 and the gender-equality action plan. In addition, the Ministry of Defence has approved its own gender-equality plan, with its implementation under the responsibility of the general staff of the armed forces and with sustained, allocated funding.

As one of the Chairs of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform (SSR), Slovakia wishes to re-emphasize that this particular aspect— security-sector reform — is essential to post-conflict peacebuilding and to creating the conditions needed for reconstruction and development. At present, the United Nations supports a rapidly expanding range of field missions aimed at assisting national and regional efforts in SSR, particularly at the sector-wide level.

Resolution 2151 (2014), on security-sector reform, underscored the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of the security-sector reform process. I wish to stress that gender-sensitive security-sector reform is key to developing security-sector institutions that are non-discriminatory, representative of the population and capable of effectively responding to the specific security needs of diverse groups. A United Nations approach to SSR must be gender-sensitive throughout its planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases.

Security-sector reform must also include the reform of recruitment processes and improvement in the delivery of security services so as to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence. There is a need for sharper focus on developing gender-sensitive SSR strategies and achieving tangible results in the field. With that aim in mind, my country is planning to host a

workshop in New York in early 2018 specifically dedicated to the issue of gender in relation to the SSR strategies.

In conclusion, the United Nations is facing unprecedented challenges to global peace and security. Civilians, most of all women and girls, are paying the highest price in the face of systematic violence and oppression. We all need to redouble our efforts to deliver changes on the ground in favour of women and girls, in particular in societies in conflict-affected areas.