

Ms. Klympush-Tsintsadze (Ukraine): First of all, I would like to thank the delegation of France for scheduling this traditional Security Council debate on the issue of women and peace and security. I would also like to express my gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres for his clear commitment to the women and peace and security agenda, and to the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, for her briefing and for her tireless efforts to ensure that this agenda is kept in focus for the whole world.

Earlier this year, both the Secretary-General and the Executive Director paid visits to my country. My delegation greatly appreciates their tireless commitment to women's rights and empowerment, and we pay tribute to their continued efforts and support for Ukraine in its pursuit of peace and security. I am glad to report that two important initiatives were launched in Ukraine during these visits: "The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Action" and "Gender Equality at the Centre of the Reforms". These two initiatives were made possible by the financial contributions of the Governments of Canada and Sweden, which we highly appreciate.

War and conflicts are devastating communities across the world today. In recent years, we have also seen widespread targeting of women and girls in conflict zones. Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda unfortunately remains relevant and critical in the face of rising violence, extremism and deadly conflicts. Seven Security Council resolutions have been adopted, recognizing and outlining that conflict affects women and men differently and that women have critical roles to play in peace and security processes and institutions.

Ukraine strongly believes that the Security Council should continuously reinforce the importance of implementing existing women and peace and security resolutions and overcoming the gaps identified in the 2015 global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), as well as in the policy brief entitled "Mapping women, peace and security in the Security Council: 2016". Admittedly, in 2017 the Council has improved inclusion of women, peace and security provisions on all relevant agenda items. In this context, we reiterate our support for the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, which has promoted gender mainstreaming in the work of the Security Council.

Law enforcement, security forces and peacekeeping missions mandated to protect civilians must do a better job of seeking out and listening to the needs of women and giving priority to their participation and protection. The international community must pay sufficient attention to providing and delivering the necessary protection for women in conflict-affected areas, in parallel with ensuring meaningful participation by women, so as to ensure complementarity between both pillars. The deployment of senior gender advisers and senior women's protection advisers is therefore critical so as to ensure that missions have sufficient gender expertise, authority and capacity to address those objectives.

A growing body of evidence had shown that perhaps the greatest but most under-used tool for building peace is the meaningful inclusion of women. That is one of the highlights of the global study's findings. The participation of women at the peace table improves the negotiation process, contributes to a more comprehensive peace agreement and bolsters the prospect of sustainable peace. It gives an important window of opportunity for setting an agenda for sustainable peace that includes the needs of an oft excluded half of the population.

While examples of women's involvement in community-based peacebuilding abound, their participation in peace processes continues to be limited. This is a problem not only for the 1325 (2000) agenda and its advocates but also for peacemakers and all those who seek peace. That is why the topic of today's discussion put forward by the delegation of France is of great importance.

Ukraine recognizes the importance of equal and full participation of women in all activities for the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. I am proud to say that in the past two years, during which Ukraine has been a member of the Security Council, resolution 1325 (2000) has been our great and long-standing daily priority. I would like to take this opportunity to share some improvements that my country has made in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), specifically with regard to its pillars on participation and protection, as well as to highlight the challenges that remain, unfortunately, to be addressed.

In 2016, the Government of Ukraine adopted its national action plan for implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) for 2016-2020. Through implementation of the plan we have been working to bring about greater participation of women in decision-making in the areas of national security and defence and peacemaking, and to ensure the protection of women and girls and prevention and response to gender-based violence. The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is also a constant feature of our annual national cooperation programmes with NATO. Experience and best practices of NATO countries are examined and included so as to promote enhanced gender culture in the national security sector in Ukraine. Moreover, this year our Government has taken the decision to bring gender equality to the highest levels of the Cabinet of Ministers of the country. Indeed, it was given the highest priority when a Government Commissioner post on gender equality was established.

The Government has also developed the State target programme on recovery and peacebuilding in eastern regions of Ukraine, which integrates a gender perspective in all of its pillars. Our Government integrates women, peace and security in ongoing security and defence reform. With the support of UN Women, we have just accomplished a comprehensive gender-impact assessment of the security sector and will soon adopt a multi-year gender-equality strategy for security and defence. These efforts aim to comprehensively integrate gender-equality and women's rights perspectives in all areas of security and defence reform.

Over the past two years, Ukraine has achieved progress in improving its recruitment policies, which resulted in a steady increase of the number of women working in the security and defence sector. Yes, the numbers are still not ideal. However, women already make up 10.6 per cent of the armed forces of Ukraine, 6.2 per cent of the national guard, 17.3 per cent of the national police and 24 per cent of the State border guard service. Currently, more than 10,000 women serve in official combat positions in Ukraine. The numbers continue to grow as a result of Government action to repeal discriminatory legal provisions, which previously impeded female military service.

While still a minority, Ukrainian women do play a prominent role in the peacebuilding process. The President of Ukraine has appointed a woman to a position in charge of the process of peaceful settlement in the Donbas region. There are also two women in Minsk working groups dealing with humanitarian and political issues. Building peace in my country requires women's participation and influence, including in the Minsk processes. It also requires action to stop the attacks against women and make sure that women will not be attacked with impunity. We will continue to work towards the development of a full range of judicial and non-judicial measures and institutional reform, in line with international standards.

As long as foreign aggression continues, peace and security will unfortunately remain a far-fetched and almost unattainable notion for the majority of women in the territory of Ukraine. Women will continue to lack protection, live in fear, have almost no recourse to justice, remain economically disadvantaged and live with limited freedom. The situation in Ukraine and the suffering as a result of Russian aggression show the importance of striking a balance between the two main pillars of the women and peace and security agenda: protection and participation. We believe that the Security Council must prioritize those two pillars.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine and its temporary occupation of part of Ukrainian territory has resulted in widespread human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence. According to the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, since the beginning of the aggression 32,252 conflict-related casualties have been recorded, including 2,505 civilians killed. A direct consequence of the Russian aggression against Ukraine has been the displacement of individuals and families, with 1.7 million internally displaced persons registered countrywide. Of those, older persons make up 78 per cent, women 58 per cent and children 8 per cent.

Regrettably, impunity for the human rights violations and abuses committed in the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, not least with regard to sexual violence, prevails. That is partly due to the fact that the conflict is ongoing and that a part of Ukraine's territory remains under the control of illegal armed groups, which are supported and managed by the Russian Federation. While there is still much to do, Ukraine has managed to make significant progress towards the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

I would like to finish my statement with a quote from the French philosopher and Nobel Prize winner Albert Camus: “Peace is the only battle worth waging”. I am confident that it is our primary task to protect and secure our fragile world in its entirety. I thank you, Mr. President, for your able leadership of today’s debate.