

Ms. Marinaki: It is an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union and its member States. I would like to express our appreciation to France, during its presidency of the Security Council, for organizing this open debate. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia; align themselves with this statement.

The European Union's approach is built on the foundations of human rights, peace and security, development and gender equality. In that context, promoting the agenda on women and peace and security is essential to realizing our shared global ambitions for conflict prevention, sustaining peace and sustainable development. We welcome the first report Secretary General Guterres on women and peace and security (see S/2017/861), and we fully support his commitment to place gender at the centre of the United Nations prevention platform. A few weeks ago, the European Union and the United Nations launched the historic Spotlight Initiative. With a European Union funding commitment of €500 million, the Spotlight Initiative intends to intensify and better target the efforts of the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate violence worldwide against women and girls.

In June, the European Union took over from Sweden the leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, a global initiative to make sure that all humanitarian actors work together to prevent and mitigate gender-based violence. Also in June, the European Union signed the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention. With that signature, we committed to further strengthen the existing legal framework and capacity to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including domestic violence.

The European Union further highlights the resilience of our zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual exploitation and abuse. We have revised the standards of behaviour for our civilian and military missions and operations, and we support the efforts of Secretary General Guterres in that regard. One thing that connects the Spotlight Initiative, our leadership on the Call to Action and our implementation of the agenda on women and peace and security is our firm belief that preventing sexual and gender-based violence is critical to conflict prevention. Conflict prevention is a keystone of our Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy and of our new European Consensus on Development.

The full and effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda remains a priority for the European Union. Eighteen of our member States have already adopted a national action plan on women and peace and security, further complemented by an implementation framework at a European Union-wide level. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Union's Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, we are devoting €6.5 billion every year to external projects on development that address gender equality and women's empowerment as either a principal or a significant objective, with the aim of carrying out more than 85 per cent of those projects in the next year.

The European Union strategy for resilience-building, adopted last June, directs us to consider the gender perspective in all our activities to support partner countries in becoming more resilient to today's global challenges. We remain committed to substantially increasing women's participation in all aspects of peace and security, including women's political participation and leadership and their important role in the fight against radicalization and violent extremism.

The European Union and its member States have progressed towards better gender balance in our diplomatic services and our field missions, including in leadership positions. In our external action, we have continued to work for women's full and active participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. In Afghanistan, we have helped female members of the High Peace Council to play an active and critical role in the peace agreement implementation. We have also engaged in working alongside and supporting the Syrian Women's Advisory Board of United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, while in Uganda we have closely engaged with the Women Situation Room, a mechanism fully operated by and for women to contain election-related violence and enable women's political participation.

Turning to mediation, the European Union continues its active involvement in mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes. Our mediation support team has been engaged in over 40 dialogues and mediation efforts worldwide. More recently, we have supported the training of Libyan women peace activists in negotiation and mediation skills.

We appreciate the important work done in the framework of the African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation and on the initiative on mediation in the Mediterranean. We have actively engaged with the Nordic Women Peace Mediators' Network and we are looking forward to closely interacting with the newly created Mediterranean Women Mediators' Network, which was launched yesterday in Rome. The European Union remains ready to contribute to better synergies and collaboration between all those networks. We fully support the United Nations network of women and peace and security focal points. We will also continue to promote the crucial role of women mediators at the grassroots level.

Let me recall the strong European Union support to the ambitious United Nations reform agenda of the Secretary-General Guterres. Promoting gender parity in the Organization, as part of the reform effort, must go hand in hand with gender analysis and the integration of a gender perspective across all activities of the United Nations.

The full participation of women and the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda should be a guiding principle for reforming the peace and security pillar. Achieving gender equality and ensuring the recruitment, promotion and retention of women, in particular at senior levels and in United Nations operations, will be critical. That requires sustainable budgetary and human resources dedicated to women and peace and security, including the systematic recruitment and appropriate integration of gender advisers as a standard part of the senior management of all United Nations operations and teams.

Just as women and peace and security represent a global agenda, the European Union has pursued global partnerships and collaborations in that regard. Our engagement and close cooperation with civil society organizations will remain at the core of our efforts. We reaffirm our determination to further develop our strategic partnership with the United Nations and to further strengthen our close cooperation with partner countries and multilateral partners. We recently stepped up our engagement in the initiative for the acceleration of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) at the regional level.

In conclusion, the United Nations can continue to rely on the European Union as its staunchest supporter in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment around the world and in pioneering together our efforts on the women and peace and security agenda.