

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General for having briefed us on the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda (S/2017/861). I also thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, Ms. Michaëlle Jean; and our terrific civil society briefer from Colombia, Ms. Charo Mina Rojas, for their important perspectives.

Bhimrao Ambedkar, the esteemed Indian jurist and social activist once said,

“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved.”

So as we engage in this debate today, I think we should keep Mr. Ambedkar’s simple but important idea in mind.

The role of women in maintaining international peace and security is more critical than ever, but we must continue to move from rhetoric to reality when it comes to fully implementing the women and peace and security agenda. Today’s debate should remind us all of the collective work that is still required to see more women gain positions of leadership in Government and civil society and seats at the negotiating table. As the Secretary-General’s report makes clear, we have so much more to do to achieve inclusivity.

For our part, the United States remains committed to advancing the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Earlier this month the United States took a major legislative step to advance the women and peace and security agenda. On 6 October, the United States Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 was signed into law. That reflects a growing body of evidence confirming that the inclusion of women in peace processes helps reduce conflict and advance stability over the long term. That Act, for example, requires my Government to develop a comprehensive strategy to expand women’s participation in security operations. It also reflects the now indisputable fact that when women are involved in efforts to bring about peace and security, the results are more sustainable.

We are taking other important steps to advance this agenda, particularly through women’s economic empowerment. We know that women’s full participation in the economy not only leads to national growth and prosperity, it also bolsters stability for all. That is why the United States has helped spearhead the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, which already has \$340 million in donor commitments and will support women entrepreneurs in developing countries by increasing their access to finance, markets, technology and networks — everything they need to start and grow a business.

I would like to turn now to the Secretary-General’s report. First, we were disheartened to learn that the number of women participating in United Nations co-led peace processes has decreased. Research shows that the participation in a peace negotiation by women in civil

society groups makes the resulting agreement 64 per cent less likely to fail and 35 per cent more likely to endure at least 15 years. We welcome the Secretary General's commitment to addressing this, but I must underscore that we all need to do more to improve women's meaningful participation in peace processes. In that connection, we welcome the development of the High-level Advisory Board on Mediation, and we hope it will find effective ways to achieve equal representation of women in mediation.

We cannot talk about the involvement of women in peace processes without applauding one recent example: Colombia. In large part because of the inclusion of women in Colombia's peace negotiations — women like Ms. Mina-Rojas — Colombia's peace agreement includes more than 100 gender-specific provisions. Therefore, when women effectively influence a peace process, it is more likely that an agreement will be reached, implemented and sustained, and we are confident that Colombia will continue to be an important example of that.

Secondly, we welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to improving impact evaluation of gender inclusion efforts. Whether on corporate boards, in Government or in post-conflict zones, we know that gender parity makes teams more effective and makes women more empowered. We look forward to results being included in next year's annual report.

Thirdly, we welcome increased attention on the nexus between violent extremism and women and peace and security. In our view, women continue to be an underutilized and undertapped resource in the fight against violent extremism. Women are of course local peacebuilders and grass-roots civil society activists. They are in touch with their communities and should therefore be seen also as a first line of defence in detecting radicalization in their communities. My country is dedicating increased focus and resources to understanding the variety of roles that women play in this space, including how women can play more vital roles in preventing terrorist ideologies from taking root.

We are grateful that there are women defying terrorist ideologies across the globe, often putting their own lives at risk in doing so. For example, when the Taliban attacked Kunduz in 2015 and again in 2016, each time they tried to kill Ms. Sediqa Sherzai, a brave journalist who runs Radio Roshani in Afghanistan. Ms. Sherzai leads discussion programmes and callin shows, and she urges women to assert their rights to an education and to lead as vital voices in their communities. Courageous women activists like Ms. Sherzai are making a difference, and thanks to the women and peace and security agenda at the United Nations, we are hopeful that those gains will continue.

The United States remains fully committed to the robust implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We welcome the Secretary-General's strong commitment to this issue, and we look forward to continuing to partner with the United Nations and other Member State to advance those goals.