

**Mr. Momen (Bangladesh):**

We convey our appreciation to the Uruguayan presidency for convening this open debate. We also thank the briefers for sharing their insights. And we acknowledge the commendable role played by Ms. Zainab Bangura as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We wish her successor the very best.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2017/249) is a glaring testimony to the increasing trends and concerns about sexual violence being used by both State and non-State actors as part of their ideologies and operations. Bangladesh joins other delegations in condemning the use of sexual violence during conflict as a tactic of war and terrorism.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security.

As Mr. Adama Dieng recounted this morning, there are far too many instances of the egregious use of sexual violence in conflict. During our war of liberation in 1971, sexual violence was committed on a mass scale against our women and girls, leaving behind in its wake 200,000 victims. In a war-ravaged country it was nearly impossible to ensure adequate protection, rehabilitation and reintegration for such a large number of victims. The overriding priority was to find custody and shelter for children born of such violence, who were abandoned in most cases. It took us more than four decades to ensure official recognition and compensation for some of the victims who mustered the courage to make themselves known and heard. The work of bringing the perpetrators to account remains an unfinished agenda.

In our modest effort to come to terms with that painful legacy, we took up the issue of women and peace and security as a critical element of our engagement in the United Nations, especially during our membership in the Security Council from 2000 to 2001. We take heart that the suffering experienced by hundreds and thousands of women in Bangladesh and around the world at least paved the way for brave young women like Nadia Mourad and Mina Jaf to appear and eloquently make their cases before the Council.

Despite our collective efforts, the magnitude of sexual violence in conflict is still overwhelming and appears to be pursued in an environment of near impunity and denial. In recent times, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international inquiry commissions visited Bangladesh to gather first-hand accounts of persecution and sexual violence against a group of people fleeing from a neighbouring country into our territory. We hope that the perpetrators will be brought to justice and that those displaced and victimized will be allowed to return to their homes in safety and dignity, with their nationality restored.

The inhumane use of sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism has duly raised alarm in the international community. The Council responded to that growing threat by adopting resolution 2331 (2016), which highlights the nexus between trafficking in persons and terrorism. Echoing the resolution, Bangladesh condemns the use of sexual violence by

terrorists and violent extremists in order to generate revenue, attract or enlist new recruits and perpetuate conflict and instability.

In our national context, as we remain engaged in a sustained counter-terrorism drive, we see a rather new trend among terrorists and violent extremists to use women and children, mostly family members, to expand their ranks. In certain cases, some of those women acted as human shields, along with their children, with fatal consequences. Our authorities have taken the utmost caution to ensure that the women and children rescued from such operations are given due protection, including in custody, and not exposed to stigma.

Our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, has called upon all women and mothers to work as sentinels within their families and to actively contribute to the whole-of-society response against violent extremism and radicalization. We remain determined to forge ahead with our women's development and empowerment efforts to defeat the violent extremists and terrorists in one of their fundamental pursuits.

The overriding messages emanating from today's open debate appear to be largely unanimous and demand our urgent and unmitigated attention. My delegation reaffirms the call for, first, shattering the culture of impunity around sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism through independent and impartial investigation and prosecution.

Secondly, the burden of stigma must be shifted from the victims to perpetrators. Adequate protection, compensation and legal and psychosocial support for victims must be ensured, while investing in the capacities of national judicial, law enforcement and correction systems to provide such support in a timely manner.

Thirdly, the tools at the disposal of the Security Council to prevent and resolve conflicts, as well as to combat terrorism, must be used, including through the application of sanctions as required, and in coordination with other relevant organs and entities of the United Nations system pursuant to their respective mandates.

Fourthly, meaningful participation by women and girls in peace processes, including in mediation and peacebuilding, must be ensured.

Fifthly, we must strengthen protection for refugees and migrants in host countries and societies, with in-built support for victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Bangladesh believes that preventing sexual violence is an integral part of the mandate to protect civilians given to peacekeeping missions. We remain committed to training our peacekeepers on sexual and gender-based violence, enhancing the participation of female peacekeepers in our contingents and encouraging our force and sector commanders to maintain regular involvement with local communities and civil society actors, among others. We condemn any allegation of sexual exploitation or abuse by peacekeepers or other United Nations staff, and we underscore the primacy of zero tolerance for such aberrations by those that are mandated to protect the vulnerable.

The inherent resilience of our women gives us the conviction that women themselves have the capacity to act as agents of change provided they find themselves in an enabling environment. As we continue to work towards leaving no one behind, we must step up our collective efforts to address all forms of inequities, discrimination and obstacles that stand in the way of unleashing the full potential of our women and girls.