

Mr. Duarte (Brazil) (spoke in Spanish):

I commend Uruguay for convening this open debate on such an important issue.

(spoke in English)

I would like to thank Deputy-Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her remarks, as well as Special Representative Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their briefings.

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and terrorism is abhorrent and utterly unacceptable. These crimes destroy the social fabric of communities and inflict long-lasting psychological trauma. Brazil has repeatedly condemned all forms of violence against all women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict. It was during Brazil's chairmanship of the Committee pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 2011, that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, then Ms. Margot Wallström of Sweden, was invited to brief the Committee on sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This eventually led the Security Council to impose sanctions, for the first time, for acts of sexual violence in conflict, in collaboration with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, placing the issue permanently on the agenda.

Notwithstanding some progress that has been made as a result of our collective engagement, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249) still paints a grim picture. Victims face lethal retaliation, honour crimes, suicide, untreated diseases, unsafe abortion, economic exclusion and indigence. Of particular concern are children born of rape, who may themselves face a lifetime of marginalization. Survivors of sexual violence in war zones must be recognized as legitimate victims of conflict and terrorism.

We support the Secretary-General's call on traditional, religious and community leaders to address harmful social norms and contribute to redirecting the stigma of rape from victims to perpetrators, who must be held accountable for their crimes. Accountability is a powerful deterrent, as well as a moral duty to those afflicted. The lack of adequate national capacity and expertise to investigate and prosecute for acts of sexual violence remains one of the main impediments to ensuring accountability not only for sexual violence but also for related crimes. This situation often leads to widespread impunity and has had an impact on access to justice and on the safety of survivors. The international community should encourage and help States to fully exercise their responsibility. Promoting the universality of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is also crucial to ending impunity.

Given the atrocity of these crimes, we must do everything in our hands to prevent them. Among other measures, we must help strengthen national capacities, curb the availability of weapons, ensure prosecution, protect victims, take adequate action to change how they are perceived in their communities, and protect witnesses.

Sexual violence is not sufficiently viewed as a threat to peace and in its relation to broader issues of insecurity. Peace agreements rarely make reference to the need to eradicate all

forms of violence against women and girls. They seldom include provisions linked to accountability for gender-based violence. Post-conflict arrangements hardly ever deal with the situation of women who have been subjected to violence during conflict and its aftermath. More has to be done to ensure that women have a voice and are active participants in peace agreements and in the negotiation, design and implementation of post-conflict and peacebuilding arrangements.

In highlighting once more the importance that Brazil attaches to the women and peace and security agenda of the Security Council, let me conclude by mentioning the release, last March, of Brazil's first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which is the result of a joint effort by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Justice and Citizenship, as well as UN-Women and civil society. Policies to protect women and girls from the consequences of war and to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual violence in conflict, are among the key components of our National Action Plan, along with measures to engage women, including in leadership positions, in peace and security initiatives.