

Mr. Grant (Canada):

I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security, an informal network of 53 Member States chaired by Canada, representing all five regional groups of the United Nations.

We thank Uruguay for organizing today's open debate. We would also like to thank Ms. Zainab Bangura for her exemplary service as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict over the past five years. Furthermore, we welcome Ms. Pramila Patten in her appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, where she can count on our full support in carrying out her mandate.

We are outraged by the persistent and widespread occurrence of sexual violence in armed conflict by State and non-State actors, as documented in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/249). Sexual violence is increasingly used as a tactic of warfare and is a flagrant and unacceptable violation of international humanitarian law and of international human rights law. We are all too aware that the already staggering numbers of reported cases of sexual violence in conflict represent a mere fraction of their true number. Furthermore, sexual violence in conflict has become both a cause and a consequence of forced displacement.

We are appalled by acts of sexual violence, including rape, child, early and forced marriage, and enslavement, committed by terrorist groups. Moreover, we are alarmed that such acts have become part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, including as a means of recruitment, financing, intimidation and the destruction of communities, in line with resolution 2331 (2016). Such heinous acts must be put to an end, perpetrators must be brought to justice and victims and survivors of such crimes must be assisted in a comprehensive manner in order to fully recover from such violations and be able to reintegrate into their societies.

We underline that a climate of impunity discourages reporting, undermines assistance and abets further violations. Addressing sexual violence in conflict must be seen as a means of conflict prevention. We therefore call for accountability for crimes of sexual violence in armed conflict, including those amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide. The effective investigation and documentation of sexual violence in armed conflict is instrumental in ensuring access to justice for victims by holding perpetrators to account. We have several important accountability mechanisms in place. However, accountability also depends on adequate legal and evidentiary frameworks to prosecute such crimes. In that regard, we highlight the international protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict, as well as the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Furthermore, we recommend that international accountability mechanisms and the Security Council's own sanctions regimes be mandated and resourced to investigate sexual violence in conflict specifically. We welcome efforts to bring Da'esh and other terrorist groups to justice for crimes its members have committed in conflict, including sexual violence. But we

must also remember that the military defeat of perpetrators is not a substitute for prosecuting crimes and recognizing the suffering of victims.

Accountability and the prevention of sexual violence should be included in peace agreements, including, where appropriate, in transitional justice mechanisms promoting justice, truth, reparations, and measures to prevent their reoccurrence. Amnesties should not be granted to perpetrators of sexual violence, and sexual violence should be explicitly prohibited by the terms of ceasefires and peace agreements. Within the United Nations, Force Commanders should meet more often with civil society, and troop- and police-contributing countries should deploy more women as channels for vital early warning information.

Accountability must be accompanied by effective and multi-sectoral support to survivors, whose deep trauma can persist long after the conflict has ended. Greater efforts are needed at all levels to ensure that survivors have access to the full range of livelihood, legal, psychosocial and non-discriminatory medical services. We must stand in solidarity with survivors not just in words but also in actions. Additionally, humanitarian assistance has to address sexual and gender-based violence by preventive as well as responsive measures, and should be based on a gender-sensitive programmatic approach.

Furthermore, we must not allow the crime of sexual violence to be compounded by the shame of stigma, the consequences of which are all too real and often deadly. Such stigma only exacerbates the marginalization of survivors and is a barrier to their full recovery and reintegration in their societies. Societies, including traditional and religious leaders, must rally to support survivors. We must declare once and for all that shame rests on the perpetrators, not on their victims.

Let me conclude by noting that inequalities give rise to and exacerbate conflict-related sexual violence, which will continue to occur so long as the inequalities that give rise to such acts persist. For that, and so many other reasons, it is incumbent upon Member States to redouble their efforts to achieve gender equality, realize women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights and empower all women and girls to become full and active participants in their societies.

Let me now make five short additional points in my capacity as the representative of Canada.

First and foremost, Canada is outraged by the scale and scope of sexual violence in conflict situations. While we have witnessed some progress in other areas of the women and peace and security agenda, it appears that the scourge of sexual violence in conflict is worsening and becoming ever more cruel and widespread.

Secondly, the systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war demands an effective and timely response. Member States cannot simply denounce the situation without taking actions within their power to assist survivors. That is why Canada contributes to Justice Rapid Response in order to help respond to and investigate sexual violence. It is also why

we have committed to hosting approximately 1,200 survivors of Da'esh this year, in particular vulnerable Yazidi women and children and their families. We welcome the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and of the United Kingdom to address the stigma that befalls the survivors.

Thirdly, we will also continue to work to prevent such acts from occurring in the first place. In that regard, it is essential to recall the importance of engaging men and boys in prevention. Fourthly, while men constitute the large majority of perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, we should be mindful that men and boys are also victims. It is therefore imperative that the States Members of the United Nations ensure that any gender analysis considers the impact of sexual violence in conflict on men and boys as well as women and girls.

Finally, it is incumbent upon all States Members of the United Nations to be part of the solution, not the problem, of sexual violence in conflict. Canada remains deeply concerned by all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff, peacekeepers and non-United Nations forces. Member States, including all members of the Security Council, must back their pledges for zero tolerance with concrete and effective action for their own personnel. Importantly, they must not stand in the way of key initiatives proposed by the Secretary-General to help rid the United Nations of this cancer. The Security Council can count on Canada to play its part in addressing this vital issue.