

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish):

I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate and for the great commitment of your country and all Council members in their recent visit to Colombia. I am sure that, after the Council's visit to my country, delegations were able to see first-hand how important the gender issue has been in the negotiations on the peace agreement and going forward in the implementation phase.

Colombia endorses the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. I would like to begin by mentioning the progress noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia (S/2017/252) and the support given by the Office of Special Representative Bangura, who personally, along with Executive Director of UN-Women Mlambo-Ngcuka, travelled to Havana and were able to see first-hand the process as it developed and to publicly express their commitment to providing support to survivors of sexual violence in our country. It is worth underscoring the strategy designed by the peace process negotiators, as there were many women team members; the gender subcommittee that was established and which ensured that whatever was agreed would meet the particular needs of women and girls; and that, in the implementation phase, 20 per cent of the military and civilian observers of the special political mission designated by the Security Council are now women.

As the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay and other members said this morning, it is important that women be actively involved in the peace process and now in the implementation process. In the light of the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/249), Colombia is committed to ensuring that the mechanisms stemming from the agreement place particular attention on the rights of victims, including victims of sexual violence, in particular women and girls, in the context of the armed conflict in my country.

I would also like to underscore the establishment of the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which define crimes of sexual violence committed in the framework of the armed conflict as crimes that do not qualify for amnesty. We must know the truth about all these events, sentence those who committed them and provide reparations for victims. A second important step that was taken in the legislative area is the approval this month in the Congress of the Republic of the constitutional amendment that establishes a special jurisdiction for peace and a unit in charge of investigations, which will include a special team for cases of sexual violence.

The peace agreements reached in Colombia are just a road map that will allow us to initiate a long process of reconciliation, which could be more challenging, as it requires restoring victims' rights and establishing decent living conditions in the countryside. In the peace agreement, we envisioned that this process would take at least 15 years and the women and peace and security agenda will play a crucial role.

Colombia recognizes the impetus and contributions provided by civil society, which has been mentioned throughout this open debate, especially women's organizations, which played an active role in the Council's recent visit. Council members were able to interact with women's organizations and it added real substance to the human rights and peacebuilding agenda

because these organizations are the ones that contribute and help the Government effectively implement early warning and prevention mechanisms to address sexual violence. Finally, we are aware that enormous challenges still lie ahead and I am certain that international cooperation will be key to finding solutions and to sharing experiences and lessons learned, which may be useful for other countries. We therefore offer our experiences as to how we have been able to make progress in providing redress to victims of sexual violence.