

**Mr. Ellinger (Czech Republic):**

Let me thank you, Mr. President, for your timely initiative in organizing today's important debate.

The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Let me also take this opportunity to declare our unfailing support for Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed's hard work and also congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her appointment as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and wish her all the best in all her future endeavours. We also thank Ms. Zainab Bangura for all her hard work in recent years.

The fact that all the stakeholders in this area take a firm position is of the utmost importance, especially now in an era when armed extremist groups place the subordination of women at the top of their agenda. Empowering girls and women, while maintaining a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of sexual violence, is the only way to address inequality and violations of women's rights.

Even in times of peace, we should not forget that sexual violence must be adequately addressed. Czech law criminalizes such behaviour. In 2015, the Czech Republic adopted its action plan for the prevention of domestic and gender-based violence for the period 2015-2018. Its aim is to prevent domestic and gender-based violence and to increase the efficiency of the victim-support system. It addresses domestic violence, as well as sexual harassment, rape, stalking and other forms of gender-based violence. The Czech action plan on women, peace and security, adopted in early 2017, sets out concrete tasks for combating sexual violence and other forms of violence against women and girls. We have also set up a framework for training sessions and programmes for military and civilian personnel in order to prevent this dangerous behaviour, together with the Ministry of Defence action plan on women, peace and security.

In the framework of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the Czech Republic has implemented a number of projects abroad, totalling CZK130 million in 2016, with a strong gender aspect, including projects aimed at preventing sexual violence and the abuse of women and girls. We have also set up health-care and hygiene centres for marginalized and abused girls and/or internally displaced persons. Those projects have been implemented in Georgia, Serbia, Kosovo, Syria, the Central African Republic and Afghanistan. In 2017, the Czech Republic started the implementation of a project aimed at combating sexual violence in Cuba.

Allow me to assure those present that the Czech Republic remains absolutely committed to strengthening the efforts of the relevant United Nations, regional and national bodies in their efforts to combat sexual violence.