

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (spoke in Spanish):

Allow me, at the outset, to express our gratitude for the convening of this important debate. We are also grateful for the concept note (see S/2017/402, annex). I also thank today's briefers for their statements.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), Guatemala has accorded great importance to this issue. We are especially concerned that sexual violence continues to be used as an instrument of war to terrorize populations. We cannot also not allow sexual violence to be used to generate income from sexual slavery and trafficking, much less for women and girls to be offered as compensation for combatants of extremist groups.

We therefore emphatically condemn all of those brutal acts, for besides clearly violating international humanitarian law and human rights, they constitute a rejection of human dignity. We fully support the emphasis that the Secretary-General places on conflict prevention and early warning. It is at that stage that we must pay close attention in order to prevent the most vulnerable — children, women and teenagers — from having their human rights violated.

That is why we must continue to include sexual violence as a designation criterion for imposing sanctions and to ensure that sanctions committees and monitoring mechanisms base their efforts on experts specializing in gender-based and sexual violence in conflict. We consider it timely for Special Representatives to share information with sanctions committees as needed.

We must underline the undeniable role that women can and must play in peacebuilding. There is an important link between women's full and meaningful participation in preventing and resolving conflicts and in post-conflict reconciliation and rebuilding efforts and the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of such efforts. Women must participate on an equal footing when it comes to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The international community must insist on eliminating barriers to the empowerment of women in the decision-making process regarding conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding — just as they are drivers of development — and we encourage more women to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Guatemala has deployed troops in areas of armed conflict. That is why it recognized the importance of resolution 1325 (2000) in laying the foundation for integrating a gender perspective in missions on the ground. We call for the implementation of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and commend the initiative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that troop-contributing countries distribute, to their entire staff, pocket-sized cards entitled "There is no excuse", which would clearly spell out the rules and prohibitions for behaviours linked to sexual abuse and exploitation.

Guatemala is currently drafting its action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) through what we call an inter-institutional table on women and peace and security. The draft will be implemented shortly.

Finally, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Nevertheless, we understand that the scope and nature of the challenge involved in sustaining peace requires strategic and operational alliances between the United Nations and Governments, as well as other key stakeholders, if we are to jointly achieve sustainable peace. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is the most progressive international legal framework for gender-based crimes. We must incorporate it into national contexts so that States can have a comprehensive framework for investigating international crimes of sexual and gender-based violence.

Finally, my delegation believes that this topic must remain on the Council's agenda, given its interlinkages with the pillars of peace and security, development and human rights. We have in our hands two important tools at our disposal — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustainable peace. Let us use them and together build a sustainable and harmonious future.