

Mr. Lal (India):

We thank the Uruguay presidency for organizing this open debate. We have carefully noted the issues raised in the concept note (S/2017/402, annex) and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249). We appreciate the useful remarks of the Deputy Secretary-General and the other briefers in that connection.

We also take this opportunity to welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of Ms. Pramila Patten as his Special Representative on Sexual Violence and Conflict, and assure her of our delegation's support in the carrying out of her tasks. We also commend the work of Ms. Zainab Bangura.

Despite the increased focus on the women and peace and security agenda, and the normative framework that has evolved during the last decade and a half, women and girls continue to be major victims despite being non-combatants. The heinous crimes against humanity perpetrated by terror networks such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in West Asia or Boko Haram in parts of West Africa or Al-Shabaab in East Africa, especially against women and girl children, are stark reminders of the serious challenges that need to be overcome by the international community.

We also agree that there is a need to increase and institutionalize the involvement of women in conflict prevention and resolution. That requires not only normative advice but capacity- and institution-building at the ground level. Therefore, the issue of women and peace and security cannot be understood in isolation from the wider societal context involving gender and development issues.

The Commission on the Status of Women and the work done by the Committee on the achievements of and obstacles encountered by States parties in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women continue to make significant progress in pushing the gender empowerment agenda that in itself has a transformative impact on societies — leading to more sustainable development and prosperity.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also highlights the importance of sustainable development for ensuring peace and security. India has been an active participant in the comprehensive deliberations on women-related issues at the various United Nations bodies. India has also been among the top contributors towards UN-Women since its inception five years back.

In the specific context of United Nations peacekeeping, India has been the lead troop contributor, with participation in nearly 50 of the 71 peacekeeping missions, and 13 of the current 16 missions. While there has been only a marginal increase in the overall number of women peacekeepers, almost a decade ago, in 2007, India deployed the first ever all-women formed police unit for peacekeeping with the United Nations Mission in Liberia. That unit served there until last year. The Liberian President underlined the contribution of the force in “inspiring Liberian women, imparting in them the spirit of professionalism and encouraging them to join operations that protect the nation”.

The percentage of Liberian women in the country's security sector has increased threefold since 2007.

India has also taken the lead in hosting specialized training courses for peacekeepers on sexual violence in armed conflict situations. They have focused, among other issues, on the role of women in the context of post conflict situations. Last month India hosted the third such specialized course for female military officers, organized by the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping in New Delhi in partnership with UN-Women. Over 40 women officers from nearly 30 countries attended the course. Such courses provide the participants not only an opportunity to train to be ready for deployment but also to network and share experiences and best practices.

India was the first country to contribute to the Secretary-General's Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Prime Minister Modi has committed to a higher representation of Indian female peacekeepers in police units to United Nations peacekeeping missions. India is committed to fulfilling the pledge of having 15 per cent of military observers as women by the end of the year. India has also committed to providing another all-female formed police unit.

Prosecution is essential for prevention. The international community has an important role in helping to build adequate resources and capacities in that regard. In that context, India recently contributed to the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Special Court was among the landmark tribunals that tried and convicted persons for crimes that included the use of child soldiers and forced marriages.

India remains ready to contribute further internationally both to the normative and to the practical aspects of issues relating to women and peace and security.