

Mr. O'Toole (Ireland):

We thank Uruguay for convening today's debate.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Observer of the European Union and with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

I also pay tribute to the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and wish the new Special Representative, Ms. Pramila Patten, success as she takes up her important role.

The recent report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General highlights the various challenges we face in addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Ireland would like to emphasize three areas we feel are in need of particular attention today.

First, in terms of the link between sexual violence and trafficking, sexual violence in trafficking are issues that must be dealt with by all countries. However, in times of war, relevant prevention and protection mechanisms are almost completely eroded, allowing the activities of terrorist groups and criminal networks to thrive. Resolution 2331 (2016) is our strongest legal instrument yet for highlighting the relationship between sexual violence and trafficking in situations of conflict. We look forward to enhanced efforts by the States Members of the United Nations and the Organization itself aimed at implementing this innovative resolution in complementarity with the women and peace and security agenda. Moreover, as Member States look towards adopting two global compacts in 2018, we hope that the vulnerability of migrants and refugees to both trafficking and sexual violence, on the one hand, and the need for women's participation in finding solutions, on the other hand, are strongly reflected in them.

Secondly, with respect to the need to place victims' needs and perspectives at the core of our work, the Secretary-General's report outlines how victims of conflict-related sexual violence can be re-victimized even after their ordeal has ended — women interrogated as potential affiliates of extremist groups instead of receiving treatment and support as victims of terrorism, children facing legal and social discrimination having been born from rape, and boys and men finding themselves excluded from victim support and redress. We commend the work of the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her team for giving a voice to those victims. We hope to see an increase in invitations to the Special Representative to brief the relevant sections committees, as well as to civil-society and victims representatives to deliver briefings in the Chamber. As a troop-contributing country, Ireland also supports further efforts to integrate the perspectives of civil society and local communities into United Nations peace operations.

Thirdly, with regard to the emphasis on prevention, we welcome the focus placed by the Secretary General's report on the link between accountability and prevention. Ireland calls for the United Nations, and in particular its Member States, to support sensitized and expert means to pursue accountability for sexual violence in conflict — for example through the work undertaken by Justice Rapid Response and the Team of Experts. Moreover, if

peacekeepers deployed by the United Nations fail to prevent sexual violence, or in fact serve as the perpetrators of such crimes, as we have shockingly seen, they must be held accountable. Troop-contributing countries and the United Nations itself have clear responsibilities in that regard.

We must also pursue prevention by understanding and tackling the conditions in which sexual violence can occur. If we implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goals 5 and 16; if we make smart, sustained investments to prevent conflict and violent extremism; if we integrate the women and peace and security agenda into all of our work on the ground; and if we reorient our peace and security architecture to foster sustaining peace, then we will be contributing to preventing future cases of sexual violence in conflict.

In conclusion, unfortunately, sexual violence in conflict has been a recurring feature of our collective history. However, the international community has never been better informed, nor has it been better equipped with legal and practical tools to tackle this scourge. The implementation of the report's recommendations would serve as a significant step towards eliminating sexual violence in conflict.