

Ms. Marinaki:

I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

A little less than a year ago, we all commemorated the first International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. On that occasion, the European Union reaffirmed its strongest support for zero tolerance to any form of sexual violence. We said it then and we say it now — sexual violence is a flagrant and unacceptable violation of human rights, and we stand in solidarity with its victims and survivors, as well as with their families.

Today, I would like to extend my special thanks to Uruguay for organizing this open debate, and to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed; Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng; and Ms. Amina Jaf, who spoke on behalf of civil society, for their statements. Let me also take this opportunity to also congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and to wish her every success in her new challenges. We also would like to thank the outgoing Special Representative, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her commitment and determined service over the past five years and wish her the best in her future endeavours.

The European Union applauds the measures taken by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire that led to the delisting of the Forces armées de Côte d'Ivoire from the annex of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/249). We welcome the report submitted by the Secretary-General. The European Union emphasizes the continued importance of a holistic approach that addresses sexual violence in conflict as part of the broader women and peace and security agenda, recognizing that sexual and gender-based violence are also the results of gender inequalities and of women's subordinated position in too many parts of the world. In addition, the issue of stigma should be analysed and addressed within the broader context of sexual and gender-based violence that may or may not be related to conflict.

While sexual and gender-based violence predominantly targets women and girls, men and boys are also among the primary and secondary victims of these crimes. We fully support the Secretary-General's focus on conflict prevention. Efforts to prevent sexual and gender-based violence fall in line with the key objective of the European Union's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy — addressing conflicts at an early stage while building resilience as a key priority for States and societies. The European Union also remains determined to lead by example in preventing sexual and gender-based violence and protecting individuals and communities from it.

We know that accountability starts at home, and in that spirit we have launched a series of actions in 2017 to combat violence against women and girls in all its forms in the European Union and worldwide. We are also pleased to inform the Council that last Friday, the Council of Ministers of the European Union decided to accede as a full party to the Council of

Europe's Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women.

We welcome the focus of the Security Council on the issue of trafficking in human beings in armed conflict, and we have built an ambitious, gender-specific and comprehensive legal and policy framework for combating it. Anti-trafficking action is also a key part of our external policies. Since 2015, our naval operations in the Mediterranean have saved more than 240,000 lives.

The European Union strongly supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and his leadership in dealing with that challenge. We are working to ensure that the highest standards of professionalism and conduct in both civilian and military operations are upheld, and to lay the ground for stronger preventive, protective and accountability measures. We have also funded the International Organization for Migration to enable it to develop tools that will help the humanitarian community prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian staff, and we hope they will also be useful for reform of the wider United Nations system on this issue, which we very much welcome.

We have been firmly advocating for and promoting women's equitable and meaningful participation in conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding, and we aim to improve the representation and participation of women throughout our civilian and military deployments. We want to see practical steps taken to tackle impunity for the use of rape by State and non-State actors as a weapon of war and to continue to change global attitudes to such crimes. Accountability and access to justice are a must, and victims, survivors and witnesses of sexual violence have to be ensured access to impartial and gender-sensitive tribunals and to reparations, including as a form of transitional gender justice.

We have adopted a framework for transitional justice for ensuring that gender is a variable that those processes take into account. Efforts to fight sexual violence in conflict should also include measures to ensure adequate information, fact-finding, analysis and data collection through proper documentation, as well as the rapid and effective investigation of such crimes. We acknowledge the key role of civil-society organizations in this area, and we will continue to work with them in that shared endeavour.

We underline the importance of making full use of the mechanisms and tools created by the Security Council to combat and prevent conflict-related sexual violence, and we welcome and encourage further use of the human rights and sexual violence-related criteria in the Council's sanctions regimes. To date, 18 of the 28 European Union (EU) member States have adopted national action plans in compliance with resolution 1325 (2000). We continue to follow up systematically on the 2014 Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict with a comprehensive, multisectoral and multidimensional approach. We have worked to ensure that all our humanitarian assistance systematically tailors its responses to the different and gender-specific needs of women and men of all ages.

I would like to flag a few concrete EU initiatives around the world for preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. The Madad Fund, the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, launched the EU's biggest-ever response package to the Syrian refugee crisis. Among other components, the programme strengthens access to protection from sexual and gender-based violence to at least 700,000 Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons in neighbouring countries.

In Somalia, we have been funding the International Rescue Committee's provision of integrated, lifesaving health services to victims of gender-based violence in eight health clinics and one hospital. Furthermore, High Representative Federica Mogherini, who represented the European Union at the Somalia conference held on 11 May in London, has announced an additional €200 million aimed at strengthening our leading role in supporting the country's development, stability and security, and together with the EU member States we have already allocated more than €460 million in humanitarian development assistance. In that regard, combating gender-based violence is an important part of our humanitarian effort.

For a decade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the European Union has been funding the Panzi hospital, which specializes in treating women who are victims of wartime gang rapes. In 2014 its founder, Dr. Denis Mukwege, was awarded the European Union's Sakharov Prize for saving the lives of thousands of women. We have also allocated €3.5 million to a project implemented by UN-Women to ensure that transitional justice processes in Kosovo, Colombia and the Philippines are tackling gender-based abuses against women. All in all, more than 84 different projects in countries around the world have reached almost 3.5 million beneficiaries.

In conclusion, in order to accelerate implementation of our commitments, in 2017 we will give priority to specific support to women refugees and victims of violence in the most remote and fragile areas. We are also strengthening efforts to ensure that women and girls arriving in the European Union after fleeing conflict, persecution, instability or poverty have access to medical care, legal support, appropriate trauma counselling and psychosocial care if they are victims of discrimination or any kind of sexual violence. While much has been achieved, we must also acknowledge that much work remains to be done. The European Union will continue to stand by the efforts of the United Nations to combat these violations together, because all women, men, girls and boys all over the world deserve to be able to lead a life free from fear and full of hope.