

Mr. Cardi (Italy) (spoke in Spanish):

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Uruguay for convening today's important open debate on a topic that is inextricably linked to international peace and security.

(spoke in English)

I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Special Adviser Adama Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their briefings.

Italy aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends on Women and Peace and Security.

In today's conflicts, civilians are increasingly caught in the crossfire. Conflict-related sexual violence is used to cause displacement, affect reproduction and ethnicity, deter opposition, offer troop incentives and undermine social and community cohesion. In recent years, concerns about the use of sexual violence have increased in two specific instances. First, there is the widespread and systematic use of sexual violence by terrorist and violent extremist groups. Secondly, the increase in flows of people fleeing from conflict has increased migrants' risk of falling prey to human traffickers, including by being a victim of sexual abuse and exploitation.

As recognized in resolutions 2242 (2015) and 2331 (2016), conflict-resolution and counter-terrorism strategies must include measures to protect and empower women and girls. We need to better implement the instruments we already have to decisively prevent sexual violence, render accountable those responsible and provide assistance to victims.

Sexual and gender-based violence is not inevitable. Prevention begins in times of peace with a strong legal framework and solid institutions. It also begins by effectively using readily available tools, such as the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, which we have supported since its inception. It is aimed at identifying and preventing atrocity crimes by using early warning indicators, such as sexual violence.

Prevention will fail if there are no consequences to the crimes. Conflict-related sexual violence cannot be pardoned. The international community has taken increasing steps to put an end to impunity, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) is crucial to that effort. The Statute of the ICC expressly lists various forms of sexual and gender-based crimes as underlying acts of both crimes against humanity and war crimes. The establishment by the ICC Prosecutor of accountability for sexual violence as one of its key strategic goals and the historic verdict of the ICC in the case against Jean-Pierre Bemba are steps in the right direction. We must continue to empower international criminal legal bodies when national jurisdictions fail or are unable to deliver justice.

Similarly, we must strengthen accountability in cases of systematic gross violations by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Da'esh, including sexual and gender-based violence, sexual slavery, abduction and human trafficking, as in the case, for example, of the Yazidi population. We agree that the Security Council, in its relevant sanctions committees and

subsidiary bodies, should expand designation criteria for the perpetrators of sexual violence in the context of armed conflict or terrorism. We successfully included such a clause in resolution 2339 (2017), on the Central African Republic, earlier this year.

Building national capacities is also central to strengthening training in order to address such crimes. That is what we are doing through the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units in Vicenza, which provides high-quality training and specialized courses for peacekeepers on the prevention and investigation of sexual and gender-based violence. This is a project we are carrying out with the United States of America.

Sexual violence has emerged as a constant of the new cycle based on conflict, trafficking in persons and migration. Migrants, especially women and girls, are highly vulnerable to trafficking for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. In our efforts to manage the unprecedented migration flows in the Mediterranean, Italy recently adopted a new law on protecting foreign unaccompanied minors that provides minors with specific assistance, including legal assistance, cultural mediation services and identification, and promotes family reunification.

Finally, as I said earlier, prevention and assistance to victims are not enough without accountability for perpetrators. It is only when sexual violence becomes visibly more costly that will there be a significant step forward towards the eradication of this scourge.