

Mr. Minami (Japan):

At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting. I would also like to join the others in thanking the briefers for their very extensive and excellent briefings.

I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to Ms. Zainab Bangura for her passionate service as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict over the past five years, and I would like to welcome the appointment of Ms. Patten as the new Special Representative.

Japan welcomes the Secretary-General's new vision on prevention, which emphasizes equal rights and women's empowerment. We look forward to the new strategy of the Task Force on Gender Parity and Equality in the United Nations System.

We are seriously concerned that sexual violence continues to be perpetrated by terrorist groups as a tactic of war and terrorism. Such acts, entailing systematic abuses toward strategic objectives, may amount to crimes against humanity and, therefore, we in turn must address them systematically and strategically. Needless to say, the Security Council is the appropriate organ of the United Nations for discussions and actions on this issue, as it is directly linked to the maintenance of peace and security; it should absolutely not be viewed as an add-on element of the Council's work.

While we welcome improvements in the quality of information on sexual violence contained in the report of the Secretary General (S/2017/249), we still see a need for the Council to be timely briefed on sexual violence in conflict in the context of country-specific situations and relevant thematic areas of work. Ample and adequate information determines the quality of our collective actions.

We appreciate the firm will of the Secretary-General to make peacekeeping operations as gender responsive as possible. In particular, Japan has been a strong supporter of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the United Nations system, as well as all efforts to realize this policy on the ground.

It is also encouraging to recognize the increased presence of women's protection advisers within United Nations peacekeeping missions. Their role to improve capacities for monitoring, analysing and reporting on sexual violence is of great importance; therefore, dedicated human and financial resources should be ensured to sustain their work. Japan has joined collective efforts in that regard by contributing financially to United Nations capacity-building training for these advisers.

Today, I would like to emphasize three points that Japan considers especially important. First, we have to recognize that there are definite limitations to the method of dealing with issues of sexual violence at the national level only, as has been the case in the past. The importance of cross-border cooperation should be fully emphasized, as in resolution 2331 (2016), on human trafficking. International judicial cooperation should be promoted to effectively hold perpetrators accountable, and financial flows to terrorists must be cut off to

thwart their objectives. Now is the time to step up our efforts to discuss and develop a new international framework of cooperation.

Secondly, acknowledging victims should be the priority of our considerations. Victims of sexual violence should be classified and treated as legitimate victims of violence, including terrorism, with the purpose of rendering them eligible for official support. This year, we decided to support a project for Syrian refugees and local communities in Jordan in the same context through United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. In addition, Japan has been an active partner of the International Criminal Court, contributing to the support projects of the Trust Fund for Victims for the victims of sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Uganda.

Thirdly, Japan is proud to be a leading supporter of the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and specifically the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, in their efforts to provide assistance to the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Somalia. I reiterate our ongoing support for the Team of Experts, and also encourage other Member States to join our efforts with the Team of Experts, which is only funded through voluntary contributions.

In conclusion, Japan has a growing concern, as the scope of this issue expands and grows more complex. We are witnessing new vulnerable victim groups, such as children born of rape, men and boys, and displaced populations. In that context, we would welcome more information sharing on these new groups by the Special Representative and the Team of Experts. Japan remains committed to combating all forms of sexual violence in conflict.