

Ms. Nescher-Stuetzel (Liechtenstein):

We thank Uruguay for providing us with the opportunity to speak on this important issue. And we are grateful to Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed, Under Secretary-General Dieng and Ms. Mina Jaf for their very important and substantial briefings. We would also like to thank Ms. Bangura for her excellent work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict over the past five years. We look forward to working with the new Special Representative, Ms. Patten.

The most recent report (S/2017/249) by the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence gives little hope that the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war is on the decline. Moreover, it emphasizes that in most cases the suffering of the survivors does not stop with the violation itself; stigma and shame exacerbate their situation further, often leading to reluctance to report such violations, thereby letting perpetrators go unpunished.

Accountability is a key ingredient in our joint efforts to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence. International criminal justice mechanisms have significantly advanced the efforts to fight impunity — as illustrated, for example, by the 1998 Akayesu judgment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which found that sexual assault constituted an act of genocide; or the 2016 Bemba judgment of the International Criminal Court (ICC), where the principle of command responsibility was invoked to find Bemba criminally responsible for rape committed by his subordinates. Those judgments send the clear message that impunity for sexual violence as a tool of war is not an option. We commend the Prosecutor of the ICC for prioritizing sexual and gender-based crimes in many of her ongoing investigations.

We have to look for other options where the ICC has no jurisdiction. In the case of Syria, the accountability mechanism established by the General Assembly currently offers the only promising path towards accountability and justice for the Syrian people. Its terms of reference note the need for dedicated expertise on sexual violence. We call on all States to continue their political and financial support for the mechanism.

Women and girls are more likely to become victims of sexual violence in conflict situations, but men and boys are also affected. Estimates suggest that one in three survivors is male. The response to the issue has been insufficient; psychosocial and medical services offered to male survivors are limited and transitional justice mechanisms often adopt a gender-binary interpretation of sexual violence, identifying women as victims and men as perpetrators. This denies men and boys access to reparations and health services. We commend Spain for adopting gender-inclusive language in resolution 2331 (2016) on human trafficking in conflict and encourage others to follow suit.

Resolution 2331 (2016) is of particular importance to Liechtenstein. It identifies a correlation between human trafficking, sexual violence, armed conflict, terrorism and transnational organized crime. It also reflects some of the ideas resulting from a joint workshop we held with the United Kingdom and the United Nations University (UNU) on denouncing and disrupting trafficking and modern slavery and protecting its victims. Liechtenstein organized another workshop with UNU in March of this year, with a focus on disrupting financial flows

associated with trafficking and modern slavery, which brought together leaders from the financial sector, as well as Member States and civil society. The product of the workshop is scheduled to be presented during the high-level political forum in July 2017 and the high-level week this fall.

Finally, let me underline that the most efficient method for ending conflict-related sexual violence is ensuring that it does not happen in the first place. Liechtenstein commends Secretary-General Guterres for his focus on prevention and would like to recall that more than half of the current membership has signed the code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, pledging to support timely and decisive action to prevent or end the commission of atrocity crimes. We call on the remaining Member States to join our efforts in ensuring the Security Council delivers on its mandate as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations and assumes the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

