

Mr. Sauer (Finland): I wish to align myself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting to mark the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. I also welcome the newly adopted resolution 2242 (2015), which Finland is proud to co-sponsor. We congratulate UN-Women for its leadership, and Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy and the high-level advisory group for the comprehensive global study to be officially launched tomorrow.

I would like to highlight some of our priorities and how we will strengthen our commitment. Finland has been a dedicated supporter of the women and peace and security agenda. This is reflected in the new Government programme setting out the implementation of 1325 (2000) as a priority. Finland is currently implementing its second national action plan. Next year we start the preparations for the third national action plan, taking into account the recommendations of the global study and the high-level review.

We welcome the fact that the United Nations reviews — the global study and the reviews of peace operations and the peacebuilding architecture — bring conflict prevention and mediation to the fore and stress the importance of the participation and leadership of women. Finland continues to promote conflict prevention and the role of mediation, and strives to effectively and meaningfully involve women in peace and mediation processes. Finland is committed to a joint Nordic initiative called Nordic Women Mediator's Network, to be established this year.

It is undisputed that increasing the number of women in peacekeeping operations enhances the effectiveness and operational capacity of these operations. Strengthening the gender architecture of peace operations, both in the field and at headquarters, is crucial. Finland will continue deploying women to peacekeeping operations as military experts in numbers at least equivalent to the proportion of women in our national defence forces. We also aim to increase the number of Finnish female police officers seconded to United Nations peacekeeping operations. As a new commitment, we stand ready to deploy a specialized unit of 3-4 female police officers to the United Nations by the end of 2016.

Gender training of peacekeeping staff, including senior management, is crucial for the effective mainstreaming of the gender perspective. Our training institutes for military and civilian peace operations personnel have adopted resolution 1325 (2000) as part of their training curriculum. Finland commits to continuing to provide gender training for all Finnish personnel deployed to peace operations.

I would like to stress the importance of abiding by the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by mission personnel. We must take more robust

measures in tackling these cases in order to make the zero-tolerance policy into a zero-case reality. We have committed ourselves to investigating and punishing all cases.

The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is facing new challenges, such as violent extremism, which has a dramatic impact on women and girls. A coordinated and integrated approach, with the leadership and empowerment of women, are needed for countering extremism.

Sexual violence and abductions of women and girls are used as a weapon of war and a tactic of terror. The critical need to address sexual violence in conflict and to step up efforts to eliminate impunity has been forcefully recognized across the world. Finland has been a staunch financial supporter in this area and will continue to be one. We have provided multi-year financial support to the International Criminal Court Trust Fund for Victims. Finland has also contributed financially to the Justice Rapid Response initiative, the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court.

Today's meeting is important for keeping up the momentum, strengthening our commitment and pressing for more results. The support for UN-Women needs to be increased in order for it to fulfil its leadership role in the promotion and implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. As one of UN-Women's top donors, Finland remains committed to supporting this goal.

We need to allocate more funds to the women and peace and security agenda. Accordingly, I would like to note that 52 per cent of funding by Finland to fragile States is directed to activities with a gender focus.

Finland is continuing partnership cooperation on national action plan processes. As an example of this cooperation, Finland has supported Afghanistan in the preparation of its recently launched national action plan, and we stand ready to support the implementation process as well.

The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is our collective responsibility. Only effective implementation at the international, regional and national levels will lead to sustainable peace and the empowerment of women.