

Mr. Issoze-Ngondet (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and expressing, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President and Head of State of the Gabonese Republic, our deep gratitude for having been invited to take part in today's debate on the crucial topic of women and peace and security. I also commend the presence here of a number of high-level dignitaries, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women.

The adoption by the Council on 31 October 2000 of resolution 1325 (2000) was a historical turning point in the efforts of the international community to ensure greater protection of women and girls in situations of armed conflict. Resolution 1325 (2000) also helped us to recognize the vital role that women must play in the different stages of the peace process, namely: conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Today's debate is an opportunity to take an objective look at the progress made in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in the light of the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing.

Despite our efforts to combat sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict, it must be acknowledged that the atrocities inflicted against women and girls never have been as appalling as they are today. Indeed, as rightly underscored in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/716), we are witnessing an unprecedented increase in the number of displaced women, crimes of sexual violence and other forms of exploitation. That is compounded by the risk associated with new threats such as climate change, natural disasters, terrorism and new warfare technologies. With regard in particular to sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict, it should be noted that these victims may be traumatized when they lack access to medical care or psychosocial support.

Resolution 1983 (2011), which was adopted by the Security Council in June 2011 at the initiative of Gabon, underscores that sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict can in some cases constitute a risk factor in the infection and spread of HIV.

Gabon welcomes the inclusion of resolution 1325 (2000) among the Sustainable Development Goals of the post-2015 development agenda, particularly Goal 5 regarding gender equality.

The full participation of women in peace negotiations is all the more important in that it ensures the inclusion of their concerns in peace agreements. Similarly, their involvement in preventing violence, peacekeeping and peacebuilding is necessary for the resolution of conflicts. With respect to the reform of peacekeeping operations currently under way, more women must be involved in the theatres of operations, in mediation and preventive

diplomacy efforts, and in the counseling necessary for the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of violence in society.

The number of female staff deployed in peacekeeping contingents must be increased so as to ensure a holistic approach to situations on the ground. Indeed, the presence of more women in these operations could help to ease tensions, create a trustworthy environment and expand the missions' mandates in the field. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote women to senior positions within the United Nations system in general and in peacekeeping operations in particular. The appointment of women to head the United Nations Mission in South Sudan since its establishment in 2011 is a perfect illustration thereof. My country encourages him to continue working to that end.

I reaffirm my country's commitment to advancing the issue of women and peace and security. Gabon has always been a haven for refugees and displaced persons from countries of the subregion that are experiencing conflict situations. It is unfortunate that these refugees and displaced persons consist mostly of women and children, some of whom are victims of violence and abuse. Gabon has always worked to provide appropriate support to these women victims by setting up specialized health-care infrastructure for displaced or refugee women, including those living with HIV/ AIDS. Similarly, the integration and empowerment programmes initiated by the Government of Gabon have facilitated the availability of arable land.

Close follow-up of the efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000) is useful. Gabon reiterates its willingness to maintain that momentum. To conclude, Gabon commends the adoption of resolution 2242 (2015) and is dedicated to ensuring its implementation.