

Mr. Perović (Montenegro): Montenegro is pleased to contribute to this important open debate and warmly thanks Spain for this initiative and for providing a platform for our deliberations. I also warmly thank today's briefers for their valuable contributions.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of landmark resolution 1325 (2000). Some progress has been achieved over the past 15 years in the global efforts to protect women from violence and to promote the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict, and in the construction of stable and just societies. Today we need to consider which practical steps should be taken in order to translate into reality our commitments on this vital agenda.

Montenegro welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/716), which demonstrates that attention to the issue of women and peace and security is increasing across the board. We also welcome today's resolution 2242 (2015), which confirms the determination of States to make further efforts in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

The issue of women and peace and security poses a challenging task. Armed conflicts often affect women and children more negatively than they do men. They lose access to basic services and to education and economic opportunities, and, increasingly, they are subjected to sexual violence. The harsh reality is that, in many conflict areas today, it is more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier.

Women's voices are distinctively underrepresented on issues that concern them, including armed conflicts as one of the most critical challenges that they are facing today. Because women do not get a chance to make their views known, the needs, interests and views of half of the world's population are not taken into account.

The potential of women to facilitate the process of conflict resolution and peacebuilding is often unrealized, thus undermining the effectiveness and sustainability of peace initiatives. Experience shows that female experts can provide additional lines of communication to local communities that are not open to male soldiers. They help in building trust and confidence, and they can draw attention to the specific needs of women and girls, including for basic services and health and education.

We should regard women as assets, not victims. It is crucial to involve women in peacebuilding processes as stakeholders and decision-makers. Women must be part of the process; that will allow them to gain ownership of the policies that affect them and all of us.

Changing deeply rooted cultural beliefs is a difficult task. It takes constant advocacy, education and awareness-raising, and should be coupled with the application of monitoring systems that force people and institutions to be aware of their own biases against women in leadership. We should renew our efforts to ensure that in every country and every community, girls and women are valued equally with boys and men. They should be given the same opportunities to grow and learn, participate and be protected from violence.

Montenegro strongly believes that women must be leaders and key participants in political decision-making and in the prevention and resolution of and recovery from conflict. Promoting gender equality and tackling violence against women, both at home and internationally, is a priority of the Montenegrin Government. We believe that where women live free of violence, have equal access to education, health care and political and economic opportunities, societies are healthier, more prosperous and more peaceful. This is our goal.

We must translate our collective commitments into action, which can result in safer environments for women and girls everywhere. Montenegro welcomes the sustained positive trend shown in the report of the Secretary-General, and we are committed to working with the United Nations system, partners and other countries to implement a reformed women and peace and security agenda and to further improve this trend.