

Mr. Gone (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. As we did in the case of your previous mandate, we express our full confidence that you, Sir, will steer the work of the Council effectively.

My country is very pleased to take part in this open debate on conflict-related sexual violence. It is high time for us to exchange views again on this important issue. My delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/249). I also thank the briefers for their outstanding presentations this morning.

The Secretary-General's report indicates that conflict-related sexual violence continued in 2016, as in the past. Often such violence was strategic in nature with specific objectives and chosen targets. Worse still, new phenomena, such as the rise of violent extremism, have further complicated the picture which was already alarming. This violence, which has disastrous consequences for the victims, their families and communities, is unacceptable. It is a serious violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The international community, and in particular the Security Council as the guarantor of world peace and security, must vigorously combat this type of violence and ensure that perpetrators are brought before the competent courts to answer for their actions. In that regard, my country particularly welcomes the adoption of resolution 2331 (2016) and fully endorses the zero-tolerance policy of the Secretary-General on the sexual exploitation and abuse committed by Blue Helmets, and the specific measures taken in those cases.

My country has emerged from almost a decade of crisis. Unfortunately, during that time there were reported cases of sexual violence, mostly individual and collective rape. Those cases are indeed touched upon in the report in question. However, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, in its determination to tackle this phenomenon, has, in addition to existing legal mechanisms, implemented a national strategy to combat gender-based violence. Thus, of 478 cases of sexual violence documented and perpetrated by the Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire and non-State actors in 2011 in the wake of the post-electoral crisis, we have moved to just one case of attempted rape in 2016. The perpetrator was brought before the Military Court.

Given the praiseworthy progress made, the Secretary-General has just removed Côte d'Ivoire from the list of countries where law-enforcement agencies and armed groups have systematically committed rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire would like to express its full appreciation to the United Nations for that decision, and at the same time we would like to call for the removal of the non-State actors from the list, as those groups, while still included in the Secretary-General's report, have not been in existence for six years. That result is the outcome of the successful cooperation between the Ivorian Government and its security

and defence forces and the United Nations. Here, I would like to pay tribute to the high quality of the work carried out by the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and her team.

In order to meet the challenges involved the Government of Côte d'Ivoire undertook actions at several levels. Regarding the strengthening of the regulatory framework, the initiatives undertaken since the 2011 crisis led to the establishment of a National Committee to Combat Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and the establishment of a mechanism for the suppression of rape. Along those lines, the Chief of the Defence Staff signed a Declaration of Commitment at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in London on 19 June 2014. In June 2015 and in July 2016 that led to the signing of commitments by 47 commanders of the armed forces and, later, by 35 commanders of gendarmerie units. That involved training their personnel on the issue of sexual violence and combating that scourge.

Currently, instruction on sexual violence in both peace and conflict forms an integral part of the training modules for training offices and military academies. Over the past three years the Government has also organized numerous workshops for the defence and security forces so as to ensure that ownership decisions are taken at the highest levels.

In terms of cooperation with the United Nations, my Government welcomes the establishment in 2015 of the Joint Mechanism between the Ivorian Armed Forces and the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire to monitor violations of human rights. We would like to express our total appreciation of the important role played by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. The team assisted my country with technical assistance in developing and implementing an action plan for the Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire. In particular, that involved setting up special police units and strengthening training for the national gendarmerie.

As a troop-contributing country, Côte d'Ivoire intends to continue along the same lines, building the capacity for its defence and security forces to combat sexual violence. My country is also determined to successfully conclude the legal proceedings regarding recorded cases and to support victims, in particular through actions taken by the Ministry of Women, Child Protection and Solidarity.

In conclusion, I should like to point out that my delegation e most of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on conflict- related sexual violence. Nonetheless, it would like to emphasize the following points.

First, Member States must bring their national legislation in line with international standards with respect to the qualification, prevention and punishment of sexual violence. Secondly, it is important to integrate the issue of sexual violence into peacekeeping operations. Thirdly, priority must be given to capacity-building in areas related to sexual violence before contingents are deployed. Fourthly, human rights, international criminal law and international humanitarian law must be taught during the initial training of national security

and defence forces. Fifthly, human rights concepts must be included in secondary school curricula and professional training courses. Finally, my delegation would like to highlight the relevance of the ever-increasing number of female personnel in national defence and security systems and peacekeeping contingents.