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Nordic statement by H.E. Mr. Per Thöresson in the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security

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Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and my own country Sweden.

At the outset, we would like to thank the Angolan presidency for organizing a debate on this important subject. We would also like to thank this morning's briefers, Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Ambassador Macharia Kamau, Ambassador Tété Antonio, and Executive Director of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network Paleki Ayang.

Mr. President,

We live in turbulent times where conflicts around the world are on the rise, leading to appalling death tolls and forcing millions to leave their homes. Often, these conflicts take place in countries that have recently experienced armed conflict, or in regions that are war-torn since decades, illustrating the difficulty of permanently ending conflicts and sustaining peace.

Through the agenda on Women, Peace and Security, we have the possibility of doing things differently and increase the likelihood of sustaining peace. The recommendations of the Global Study and UNSC Resolution 2242 give us momentum to move away from an ad hoc- and add-on approach and to start include women on an equal footing with men in all stages of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building. This must be a top priority for all our governments. Any international actor working for peace and security that wants to be relevant and efficient in the 21st century has to integrate the Women, Peace and Security-agenda in a coherent and effective manner.

Mr. President,

Prevention of conflicts is the most life-saving and cost-efficient manner to foster peace and avoid suffering. Therefore, prevention merits much more attention than currently is the case, not least in Africa. Women's role in this, and the need of equal representation and active involvement of women in all governmental, non-governmental and community fora, cannot be overstated.

I would like to highlight three particularly important aspects related to the issue.

Firstly, we need to focus on representation. It is essential that we enhance the influence and meaningful participation of women at all levels and stages in peace processes. Peacebuilding needs to be inclusive. Only through women's active participation in peace processes, such as the ones in

Mali, South Sudan and Somalia, can we ensure that the needs and interests of society are truly reflected and addressed. Indisputable evidence, as highlighted by the Global Study, have established positive links between active participation of women in peace processes and the likelihood of peace agreements to be signed, implemented and sustained.

Secondly, we need to focus on women mediators. Resolution of conflicts requires skilled, impartial and respectable mediators that can encourage settlements that reflect the needs of the entire population. Although women's participation increases the likelihood of success, peace mediators are all too often exclusively men. Hence, we must increase the number and percentage of women mediators. This is a Nordic priority, which has resulted in the establishment of networks of women peace mediators at the national, regional and international level.

Thirdly, we need to shoulder leadership. Promoting women's participation in conflict resolution and conflict prevention is about promoting change – and in order to promote change we need to be brave, persistent and have a committed pro-active leadership. Enhancing gender equality and the contribution of women to peace and security will require us to address a wide array of issues, including the lack of resources and their uneven distribution which often are at the core of inequality. To achieve real change, political commitment needs to be accompanied by sustainable financing. We need to allocate resources and have the right expertise. This is about leadership and we must do more to integrate this aspect in all strategic analysis, planning and operational work of the UN.

Mr. President,

In concluding, conflict analysis must include gender aspects that reflect and address the specific needs of women and men, girls and boys. We cannot ignore the different roles women play, nor the insights women bring to the table. Sustainable development, peace and security can never be achieved if half the population is excluded. In order to take our common commitment seriously, we need to make sure that women's voices are being heard, and that the needs and realities of women living in conflict and post-conflict countries influence our decisions.

Thank you.