

Ms. Yáñez Loza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks France for convening today's open debate on an issue of increasing importance to the Organization. I believe it is important for all of us here in the Security Council to draw the international community's attention to the need to periodically revisit the issue of the role of women in the area of peace and security. They are simultaneously the victims of conflicts, participants in fulfilling peacekeeping operations' mandates and society's peacebuilders.

Ecuador welcomes the report of the Secretary General (S/2017/861), the concept note (S/2017/889, annex) provided to guide our work and the important briefings we heard today. We agree on the ever-present and genuine need to work to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women and the protection of their rights, and to raise awareness about the risks they face, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Conflict prevention and resolution, postconflict reconstruction and lasting peace can be fully achieved only if those intrinsic goals are duly taken into consideration.

In that regard, my delegation welcomes the mechanisms that have been established to include a gender perspective in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes. Gender-based violence and sexual violence in conflict situations will always be unacceptable, which is why it is important for those responsible for such crimes to be held accountable. Support mechanisms must therefore be established for victims, as well as ongoing educational processes for societies. For many, the face of the United Nations is its peacekeeping operations. Every effort must be made to end the cases of sexual abuse and exploitation in those operations for good, as such abuses undermine the Organization's credibility.

The current national challenges in the area of women's participation and leadership are not the result of a lack of legislation, public policies or administrative structures, but rather of the lack of implementation of such laws, policies and structures. That is because mindsets still have to be changed, and that must be done every day. If change is to be permanent, our inclusion efforts must be ongoing and meaningful, but that is a slow process in which we have to contend with glass ceilings, broken ladders and sticky floors. Planning, regularly submitting reports and disaggregating statistics are therefore all-important. In addition, the cross-cutting nature of gender equality increasingly demonstrates the interrelated nature of the various forums and the need to work assiduously to assess the outcome of today's meeting.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that, starting this year, Ecuador has three women in its infantry unit serving as peacekeeping operations observers. We trust that that will be the start of an ongoing and growing participation that can be extended to other branches of our armed forces and police force, as yet another sign that my country is committed to the ideals of peace and security on which the Organization is based.