

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I warmly thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary General, Ms. Ribeiro Viotti; the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka; Ms. Mina Rojas; and the Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, Ms Michaëlle Jean, for their very enlightening briefings.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the vital role played by civil society in promoting and implementing this very important agenda, on whose behalf Ms. Mina Rojas delivered a strong and committed message today. I take this opportunity to reiterate France's support for the initiatives of organizations that campaign for respecting and promoting women's rights in the field. Those initiatives must not be hindered, but instead robustly supported and encouraged.

I also welcome the presence and commitment of the Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, Ms. Michaëlle Jean, to this agenda. The efforts of the countries of La Francophonie indeed symbolize a strong and important message. I would like to say another word of support, together with Germany, for the determination of the African Union and Ghana to establish a network of African women leaders. We also welcome Italy's initiative to build a network of women mediators in the Mediterranean, which was launched yesterday in Rome.

I turn first to the issue of our collective commitment with regard to the practical implementation of this agenda and the participation of women, before briefly presenting the efforts undertaken by France on a daily basis to that end.

We simply cannot resolve crises without ensuring the protection and participation of women. Women must be protected — that is essential — but they must also be fully involved in conflict prevention and resolution. That must be a genuine common priority not only in our words but also in our actions to ensure both equality and efficiency. The participation of women in political processes and in conflict prevention and resolution remains grossly inadequate: from 1992 to 2011, 4 per cent of peace agreement signatories and fewer than 10 per cent of negotiators participating in peace talks were women. The report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2017/861) refers clearly to this state of affairs and underscores the fact that some areas, such as disarmament, are still closed off to women. That shows just how much we must change the breadth of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We must move from words to actions. We are not talking about a peripheral issue; we are talking about a pivotal matter that should lie at the heart of the daily work of the United Nations.

The Security Council has adopted eight ambitious resolutions on this subject; however, it is quite clear that their implementation remains woefully insufficient. Progress has certainly been noted, particularly within the Council: three-quarters of resolutions take the women and peace

and security agenda into account and an informal group of experts has been set up. A network of national focal points has also been established. But now Governments must embrace their responsibility and develop national, and even regional, plans and implement them. In short, it is time to take practical action.

It is also necessary to set aside space to implement a global, frequent and responsible evaluation of the initiatives we carry out. We need to step up our analysis conflicts against the backdrop of gender, including through an exchange of best practices. Measuring progress will also be important, as it will present a challenge for years to come. We are well aware of the fact that — and this has been said, but it bears repeating — when women participate in peace processes, the lasting success of peace agreements over a period of at least two years increases by 20 per cent, and the likelihood of an agreement remaining in place for at least 15 years increases by 25 per cent. Once again, therefore, that is an obligation that is not just a matter of equality but of efficiency. The United Nations itself must be exemplary in that regard, and we welcome the establishment by the Secretary-General of a pool of female talent for access to leadership positions.

France is committed to staying at the forefront of the international community's efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda. I would now like to briefly present our national action plan for the implementation of this agenda. First, however, allow me to recall the fact that our parity law has undeniably enabled France to achieve decisive progress in women's representation in the political life of my country. The French Government has achieved parity, as has the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations here in New York.

More specifically, France is implementing its second national action plan on women and peace and security, which covers the period 2015-2018. It is built on five pillars: participation; protection, which during conflict means primarily protection against violence, but also more broadly protection for the rights of women; the fight against impunity; prevention, especially through raising awareness of violence against women; and promoting the women and peace and security agenda. For each of those pillars we are implementing initiatives at the national, multilateral and concrete cooperation levels. Allow me to briefly mention a few examples.

First of all, France is taking action against impunity when crimes are committed against women, including to enable women's access to justice. To that end, we fully support the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse. In the same spirit, the President of the French Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, joined the circle of leaders at the high-level segment of the General Assembly.

Along the same lines, the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, signed the pact between the United Nations and Member States. In that regard, we commend the recent appointment by the Secretary-General of an advocate for the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Our efforts are also ongoing daily on the ground. For instance, we continue to support humanitarian programmes aimed at assisting women affected by the consequences of the crises in Afghanistan; the Central African Republic; Lebanon, as a result of the Syrian crisis; and Nigeria. We are also undertaking numerous projects to protect women from human trafficking, as a priority.

We must also more implement more coherently the women and peace and security agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Our official development assistance already has fully incorporated the gender dimension, and the number of projects with a direct impact on the lives of women is rising as well. France has also undertaken a comprehensive effort and set specific goals to increase women's participation in its armed forces. Appointments have risen significantly, and women's representation has virtually doubled since 1998 to 15 per cent of overall troops today, which, of course, is not fully sufficient, but progress continues to be made. The armed forces, including peacekeeping operation contingents, must also be made more aware of gender issues, and to that end gender advisers' functions, as has been mentioned, must be sustained within these operations.

Lastly, our national action plan dovetails closely with the European Union's efforts, and here I am thinking in particular of initiatives to address the situation of women in Afghanistan and Syria and of the recent joint initiative between the United Nations and the European Union, known as the Spotlight Initiative, which will make possible specific responses to violence against women.

France can be counted on to continue to do everything in its power to advance this agenda, which is at the very heart of the activities and values of the United Nations. Our vision is that of living in a world in which women are no longer victims of violence but can take their rightful place in conflict settlement and in the political, economic and social life of their countries. This is an imperative for equality and effectiveness. Women are the key to lasting peace and security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement.