

**Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (spoke in Spanish):**

First, allow me to commend the Russian Federation for convening this open debate on the occasion of the sixteenth anniversary of the women and peace and security agenda. This is an opportunity to underscore the commitment of Member States to empowering women and to facilitating their participation in conflict- prevention, peacebuilding and in decision-making on matters relating to peace and security. I would like to thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, and Ms. Rita Lopidia, on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their statements.

A year ago the Security Council adopted resolution 2242 (2015). As Guatemala was one of the 72 sponsors of the resolution, we are happy to inform the Council that pursuant to the resolution, the Government of Guatemala has established an inter-agency panel on women, peace and security in order to improve governmental coordination for the establishment of a national plan of action, which is expected to be completed this year.

The appropriate implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) requires the unwavering political will of all competent Government authorities, requiring the allocation of clearly earmarked resources both in national budgets and in the contributions of international donors. Governments and civil society should work together and complement each other's efforts.

We reiterate that the prevention and protection of women against gender violence and sexual abuse require the involvement of all, including men and boys. We strongly condemn cases of sexual violence and the fact that it continues to be used as a tactic of intimidation or terrorism. We also condemn violence and sexual abuse in peacekeeping operations. We demand the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy. Security forces entrusted with ensuring the security and integrity of women as an important aspect of peace and security must be made to understand that.

Guatemala is striving to combat impunity and to bring the perpetrators of sexual abuse to justice. In that regard, early this year we brought to justice two soldiers who were responsible for the sexual enslavement of 15 Quechi women in the military base of Sepur Zarco. Although it took 32 years to bring this case to trial, we believe that it is worth mentioning because access to justice should be guaranteed for all Guatemalans. However, we must improve access to justice and strengthen the participation of women in the process of drafting national legislation.

We welcome the fact that the women and peace and security agenda is being addressed in a cross-cutting fashion, in coordination with the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund. It is also worth noting the establishment of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and of the national focal point network for women and peace and security on 23 September under the leadership of Spain.

Moreover, we acknowledge the contribution of mechanisms, such as the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women and Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, together with additional existing mechanisms, as a way not only to raise resources, but to coordinate responses and accelerate implementation. The participation of women is essential to ensuring operational effectiveness and ensure sustainable peace. The concept of sustainable peace is very important, as Ambassador Rosenthal mentions in his report (S/2015/490).

The Rome Statute, which is the international legal framework on gender-based crimes, is the most progressive to date. It is important to incorporate it into national legislation so that States have a comprehensive framework for investigations into international crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, targeted proceedings to support victims and witnesses, programmes to inform women of the laws that concern them, resources to monitor the implementation of laws that take the gender perspective into account, and provisions for the compensation of victims. All of those components are essential to ensuring that women have access to justice.

Guatemala has always supported that agenda and reiterates that women play an essential role in preventing and resolving conflicts, promoting justice, fostering reconciliation, supporting disarmament, demobilization and social reintegration, and rebuilding national institutions. Women are the critical link in development as they are the centre of the family and the source of its values, customs and the identity of each child. All these are essential pillars for consolidating lasting peace. It is essential that women be involved in decision-making at all levels.

In conclusion, we urge all Member States represented here to take this unique opportunity to move towards a much stronger and substantive commitment to gender equality so as to ensure that the empowerment of women and girls becomes one of the cornerstones of peacebuilding.