

## **The Secretary-General:**

I thank the Russian presidency of the Security Council for organizing this very important meeting to discuss women's role in peace and security.

Women have a vital role to play in preventing conflict and building and maintaining peace. But, although that is now widely recognized, far too often women are prevented from fully participating in peacemaking and peacebuilding. We are all suffering from the effects of that deficit. In our interconnected world, insecurity and conflict in one country or region affects us all.

Nine years ago, I addressed the Council during its first open debate on women and peace and security (see S/PV.5766). Since then, the United Nations has made some progress in the promotion of the women and peace and security agenda. The establishment of UN-Women amplified women's voices and created momentum for women's leadership on peace and security. The Office of my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict is focusing international attention on one of the greatest moral challenges of our time. The Council adopted new resolutions on women and peace and security. Last year's high-level reviews of our peace operations and peacebuilding architecture, and the global study on women and peace and security, spurred new commitments and determination.

When I became Secretary-General, there were four countries with national action plans on women and peace and Security; today there are 63. I personally have appointed many women as Special Envoys and Special Representatives. I also appointed the first female Force commander of a peacekeeping mission and the first female Police Adviser. Hundreds of thousands of women and girls are being helped and supported by United Nations programmes in conflict-affected countries. National and international tribunals have issued verdicts that are historic milestones for gender justice. Many countries have committed to action to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. Perhaps most important of all, we see more inclusive peace processes and peace agreements. The Colombian peace talks included a group dedicated to gender perspectives and women's rights. More women than ever before are making decisions for peace and security in the halls of Governments and international organizations.

I am painfully aware that, despite all those steps, the situation remains far from equitable. I am ashamed of the many atrocities that continue to be committed against women and girls, including by some of our own peacekeepers. I am angered by the continued political exclusion of women. Peace processes, humanitarian programmes and peacebuilding plans ignore them and fail to meet their needs and protect their rights. Look at the pictures of peace negotiations on Syria or Yemen. There may be one woman at the table or in one delegation. That is fully representative of the general picture. And all that is against a backdrop of women and girls suffering inequalities that are aggravated by conflict, who are targeted for particularly brutal crimes by violent extremist groups, including Da'esh and Boko Haram. As we carry this agenda forward and build on past efforts, I urge members to take several specific steps.

First, I urge the Council to seek information on women and girls in all its reports and briefings on countries affected by conflict. Without relevant information, peacekeeping mandates will never meet the needs of women and girls. Too often, what is not counted does not count.

Secondly, I urge the Council to hold all United Nations peace operations accountable for putting women and girls at the centre of their work.

Thirdly, I encourage the members of the Council to listen to civil society, and in particular to women's groups, in all their deliberations on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Fourthly, I urge the Council to make sure that there are funds available for those activities. The failure to fund this agenda is possibly the greatest obstacle we face to implementation. I call on members to earmark a minimum of 15 per cent of funding on peace and security to programmes that address the needs of women and girls, and to make full use of the new pooled fund that was created to channel more resources to women's organizations working for peace.

And, fifthly, I encourage the Council to consider ways to make peace negotiations more diverse. After more than 15 years of advocacy, that has not happened. Clearly, new ideas and stronger action are needed.

In failing to include women and girls in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes, we are not only failing women and girls, we are failing the world. This agenda is not an optional extra, or a favour to women and girls. It is fundamental to building sustainable peace and ending the conflicts that are causing so much pain and damage around the world. There is more research emerging every year to demonstrate that. Let me remind the Council of one finding among many, namely, that peace accords are 35 per cent more likely to last at least 15 years if women are at the table.

I will never forget the strength of the thousands of women and girls whom I have met in some of the harshest places on the planet ravaged by war. I have been inspired many times by women who are working to prevent conflict and build peace, and by the sacrifice of countless women human rights defenders. I urge the Security Council to do everything possible to create the conditions for peace in our world. I will never stop, and we must never stop, in the urgent drive to bring women into their rightful place at the heart of building peace and security.