

**Mr. Winid (Poland):**

Let me begin by thanking Uruguay for organizing this timely debate.

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, but I would like to add some comments in my national capacity.

Since the adoption of resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013), which recognize rape and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity, there have been several positive developments in addressing those issues.

First of all, combating sexual violence has been included in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, while the international community has begun to deploy gender advisers and female protection officers trained in sexual violence issues.

Secondly, the availability and quality of data on sexual crimes has improved and many perpetrators have been brought to justice, as happened in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Uganda.

Thirdly, awareness-raising campaigns and greater involvement by the international community have played a key role in legislative reforms in conflict-affected countries where rape had not been previously recognized as a crime.

Finally, since 2010, the number of national action plans has increased, with many countries having implemented national strategies aimed at providing assistance to victims and survivors of sexual violence.

Yet, unfortunately, sexual violence is still used as a weapon of war and a systematic tactic of terrorism and torture and, in some cases, continues to be widespread and to go unpunished. There is still silent consent with regard to sexual violence in some conflicts, which continues to be underreported, mainly due to the sociocultural stigma it represents and a general lack of awareness, but also because of the fear of reprisals and the lack or weakness of institutions and services.

There is an urgent need to hold perpetrators accountable and to provide victims and survivors with basic services, such as health care, psychological support, financial aid, legal assistance and socioeconomic reintegration services.

The international community faces multiple challenges with regard to conflict-related sexual violence. New trends, including an increase in violent extremism and mass migration, may trigger incidents of trafficking in persons for purposes of sexual exploitation and violence. Such incidents disproportionately affect women and children from ethnic and religious minorities. In that regard, let me thank Spain for bringing forward resolution 2331 (2016), which establishes the link between human trafficking and conflict-related sexual violence.

There is in fact political will to address the issue of conflict-related sexual violence, but more needs to be done to fight the culture of impunity. Combating sexual violence in conflict is an integral part of the wider conflict-prevention agenda, and we should spare no effort to tackle the problem holistically. Raising awareness about the scale of sexual violence in conflict and

its impact on societies is the first step. One example is the successful initiative of Argentina and its General Assembly resolution 69/293, proclaiming 19 June as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. It draws the attention of the international community to the problem while honouring the victims and survivors and paying tribute to all of those involved in eradicating those crimes.

Secondly, there must be training for medical staff, military and police personnel, lawyers, prosecutors and judges in gender sensitivity and ways to better prevent, recognize and respond to sexual violence and other forms of violence against civilians. They must be trained in facilitating the reporting of crimes related to sexual violence. Such programmes must include predeployment training, the deployment of more female gender advisers and measures for ensuring greater representation of women in national police services in order to facilitate survivors' reporting about cases of sexual violence.

The allocation of adequate financial resources is another important point. As a proof of our commitment, the Polish Government last year contributed 2.5 million zlotys to the UNICEF operation in Mosul, Iraq, providing assistance to thousands of Christian and Yazidi women and girls fleeing from the horrors of trafficking, forced marriage and sexual enslavement perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Last but not least, cooperation among conflict-affected Governments, civil society and the international community cannot be underestimated. One of the best examples of fostering collaboration among various stakeholders is the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, which was launched five years ago by the United Kingdom.

Let me conclude on a positive note by commending Colombia for developing an exemplary legal framework for addressing conflict-related sexual violence, and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for its policies to provide services, justice and reparations for survivors. Their commitments could serve as an example for State and non-State actors from other conflict-affected areas on ways to address this difficult issue.