



# Security Council

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## **Letter dated 21 July 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Ms. Khin Ohmar, Founder and Chair of Progressive Voice, on behalf of NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security; and Ms. Nadia Carine Therese Fornel-Poutou, Executive President, Association des Femmes Juristes de Centrafrique; as well as the statements delivered by Their Excellencies Mr. Philippe Goffin, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Belgium; Mr. Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany; Mrs. Naledi Pandor, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa; Ms. Elback Zeinabou Tari Bako, Minister for the Advancement of Women and Child Protection of the Niger; and by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, Indonesia, the Russian Federation and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference convened on Friday, 17 July 2020 on women and peace and security: conflict-related sexual violence.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members for this video-teleconference, the following delegations and entities submitted written statements, copies of which are also enclosed: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, the European Union, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 2 April 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/273), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the enclosed briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Christoph Heusgen  
President of the Security Council



**Annex 1****Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten**

We meet today to find effective ways to turn commitments into compliance and resolutions into results. We meet in the spirit of pursuing a survivor-centred approach, which ensures that survivors of wartime sexual violence will not be forgotten, even in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic that has captured the attention of the world.

In that respect, I would like to sincerely appreciate the leadership of Germany in convening this debate during exceptionally challenging times, and to particularly thank His Excellency Mr. Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is presiding over this meeting for the second consecutive year (see S/PV.8514). I also extend my appreciation to the Dominican Republic for its support and collaboration at all stages of the planning process. I warmly welcome the civil society briefers from Myanmar and the Central African Republic, as well as Special Envoy Angelina Jolie, who will lend their unique voices to our collective search for solutions.

The annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/487) before us today paints a sombre and harrowing picture of sexual violence used as a tactic of war, torture and terror and a tool of political repression to dehumanize, destabilize and forcibly displace populations. This is a crime that shreds the very fabric that binds communities together, leaving social cohesion and safety nets threadbare. It is a biological weapon, a psychological weapon and an expression of male dominance over women and of one group over another. Conflict-related sexual violence is a crime that sets back the cause of gender equality and the cause of peace. These are interlocking issues. More gender equality means greater social stability, and the inverse is also true.

The report before us documents almost 3,000 United Nations-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence committed over the course of a single year. The vast majority of incidents — 96 per cent — targeted women and girls, although more than 100 confirmed cases also affected men, boys or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex individuals. Eight hundred and forty-eight cases were attacks on children. Behind every figure presented in the report is a human story. Too often it is the story of a survivor who walks in shame, while the perpetrator walks free. It is the story of a military or political leader who feels above the law and a civilian who has fallen beneath the scope of its protection.

Accordingly, the report emphasizes the imperative of a survivor-centred approach, as articulated by the Council for the first time in resolution 2467 (2019). A survivor-centred, rights-based approach requires tailored solutions that build resilience, restore voice and choice to survivors and address the diverse experiences of all affected individuals. In this way, it tackles the intersecting inequalities and root causes to ensure that no one is left behind or excluded from the dividends of peace and development.

As I have seen first-hand in the field, war does not speak with just one voice. There are countless stories that are shrouded in silence and left out of the historical record. Diverse life experiences must inform policy, operational and funding decisions. If these decisions are not gender-based in their design, they will be gender-biased and exclusionary in their effect.

The report spans 19 countries of concern. Each country section includes a targeted recommendation, which can be cited at relevant moments, such as peacekeeping mandate authorizations, country-specific deliberations, sanctions

decisions or the design of peace negotiations, ceasefire agreements and transitional justice processes.

To highlight a few key examples, following my visit to the Central African Republic in May of last year, I advocated for the Government to nominate a special adviser to the President to work with my Office on advancing the implementation of the joint communiqué on conflict-related sexual violence. In other settings, key legislative reforms are recommended, such as the adoption of the long-pending sexual offences bill in Somalia and the draft law on the prevention of violence against women in Myanmar. In South Sudan, the United Nations has been engaging with armed groups following the abduction of hundreds of women and girls in Western Equatoria. Many are still languishing in military bases, and the report calls for their immediate release. Likewise, in Syria and Iraq, many Yazidi women and girls have not yet been released from captivity by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and remain missing and in desperate need of services and family reunification. In post-conflict contexts, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, survivors of sexual violence are still fighting to realize their rights and status as legitimate victims of war in order to access reparations and redress. Moreover, although sexual violence has been widely used as a tactic of terrorism in contexts such as Iraq, Nigeria, Mali, Somalia and Syria, it has not been prosecuted as such.

Every report about wartime rape also testifies to its underreporting. This is linked with fear of stigmatization and reprisals, lack of access to services and the justice system, and harmful social norms around honour, shame and victim-blame. The monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements have deepened the evidence base for action. Yet such arrangements are only as effective as the resources and capacity behind them. Women protection advisers, who convene the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements, have improved the quality and quantity of information. Eighty-six per cent of cases documented in the report come from settings where women protection advisers are deployed.

The report also lists 54 parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence in situations on the agenda of the Council. More than 70 per cent are persistent perpetrators, having appeared on the list for five or more years. For the first time, this year's report features an assessment of compliance gaps, which notes the prevailing disregard for international norms and obligations by parties to armed conflict. It finds that the majority of persistent perpetrators have not made meaningful commitments to curbing violations.

Accordingly, there is an urgent need for greater coherence between the practice of listing and the practice of imposing targeted and graduated measures to leverage behavioural change. We know that sexual violence is characterized by staggering rates of impunity and recidivism. It is time to usher in a new era of enhanced monitoring and enforcement, bringing all tools to bear. It is time to change the calculus of belligerents who operate on the assumption that rape remains cost-free. Eight sanctions regimes now include sexual violence within their designation criteria. Designating parties for these crimes sends a powerful political signal.

Since 2009, my mandate has engaged constructively with numerous parties, resulting in the signing of 10 joint communiqués or frameworks of cooperation with States, and has encouraged the adoption of unilateral communiqués and codes of conduct by several non-State armed groups. This experience has shown that strategic dialogue is most effective under the shadow of a credible threat of accountability and enforcement.

As the report notes, we have rarely seen linear progress from commitments to compliance owing to an increasingly complex global security environment.

Sexual violence does not occur in a vacuum but is tied to broader risks, such as the resurgence of hostilities, rising violent extremism, militarization, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, population displacement and collapsed rule of law. These factors trigger renewed patterns of sexual violence, which the report finds to be concentrated in contexts of abduction, captivity, displacement and detention and in remote, rural areas where women undertake essential livelihood activities. In addition, there is a constant oscillation between progress and regression, forward momentum and backlash, on women's rights.

We began 2020 anticipating a jubilee year for the women and peace and security agenda with the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), the twentieth-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations of 1945, with its founding promise of gender equality. Yet we find ourselves fighting to prevent the rollback and reversal of hard-won gains. The report draws attention to the global political climate of pushback on women's rights, evident in reprisals against women's human rights defenders, physical and financial risks to women's civil society organizations and shrinking civic space.

Anniversaries and annual reports are not just about looking back but also about looking forward. They serve not only to measure progress but to inspire and accelerate it. It has been said that the one thing stronger than all the armies in the world is an idea whose time has come. The women and peace and security agenda, reflected in 10 robust resolutions, is that idea. It is not an issue that can wait until urgent matters are resolved; it is a strategy for resolving them more equitably and fully. It is a way of adapting to the changing face of conflict in the twenty-first century.

Of course, the coronavirus disease pandemic has dramatically affected the work of the United Nations, and my mandate has not been spared. But what the virus has not changed are the needs of survivors. What has not changed is the right to physical integrity and bodily autonomy. Also unchanged is the fact that war and rape rage on in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan and elsewhere. In this climate of intersecting crises, one thing is clear — it is time to silence the guns and to amplify and unmute the voices of women. The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire means that all parties must cease the use of sexual and other violence.

Today's debate sets the stage for a new decade of decisive action along three main lines: first, empowering survivors and those at risk through enhanced resourcing and quality service provision to foster an enabling environment in which they can safely report violations and seek redress; secondly, acting on the reports and information received to bring parties into compliance with international norms; and, thirdly, enhancing accountability as a critical pillar of prevention and deterrence, ensuring that parties are duly held to account when they fail to comply with their commitments.

Prevention is the best response. Yet we have struggled to measure, or even define, progress on the prevention pillar of this agenda. Compliance is a concrete example. Sexual violence persists not because the existing frameworks and obligations are inadequate, but because they are inadequately applied. Resolution 1820 (2008), in paragraph 2, demands nothing less than the "immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians". This resolution defined a new norm and drew a red line. Now we must clearly demonstrate the consequences of crossing it. We must keep these crimes and their perpetrators in the spotlight of international scrutiny. As the well-known legal maxim reminds us, justice must be done, and be seen to be done. Survivors must be seen by their societies as the holders of rights that will ultimately be respected and enforced.

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**Annex 2****Statement by the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Angelina Jolie**

I am grateful to Germany and the Dominican Republic for holding this debate within the framework of the women and peace and security agenda. I am honoured to speak alongside Special Representative Patten and our brave colleagues from Myanmar and the Central African Republic. Entrenched discrimination in society and the gendered impact of sexual violence demand that actions be taken for survivors. I would like to speak today about one of the most overlooked groups of survivors: children.

When resolution 2467 (2019) was adopted last year, it was the first to put survivors and their needs and rights at the centre of all actions. But resolutions, words on paper, are just that — promises. What counts is whether the promises are kept. As every member of the Council knows, there is nothing worse than to break a promise to a child. Yet that is what we are doing year after year to countless children. The fact that we will never meet them does not lessen the betrayal.

I have met child survivors of sexual violence, as well as domestic violence, trauma and abuse, everywhere. There is no continent untouched by these crimes, and there is no country, rich or poor, that should not take a hard look at its own laws, its own agencies, its own media reporting of these issues, its own treatment of survivors and its own social attitudes.

But I want to start, if I may, with one example. When the so-called Islamic State attacked the Yazidi community in Iraq in 2014, it abducted, enslaved and tortured thousands of women and children. Many children were murdered, but nearly 2,000 have returned. Many suffer from post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression. They experience flashbacks and recurrent nightmares that are typical for children who have experienced trauma and abuse. Many of the children witnessed the murder of their relatives and the rape of their mothers.

One doctor, who has provided medical care for hundreds of Yazidi women and girls, said that almost every girl she had treated between the ages of 9 and 17 had been raped or subjected to other sexual violence. In some cases, victims were girls under the age of 9. They suffer serious health issues, including traumatic fistulas and scarring, in addition to trauma, difficulty accessing education and even a struggle to prove their identity.

Yet according to a forthcoming report by Amnesty International, based on interviews with survivors, humanitarian workers and other experts, there are still very few services available for Yazidi child survivors and children born of rape. What few services there are have been largely focused on women survivors, who have immense trauma and unmet needs of their own, made worse by displacement, poverty and the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The reality is that no one is getting the care they need. But there is a specific lack of dedicated care for children. One mother, whose daughter was abducted when she was 6 years old and survived three years of beatings and abuse, could not get medical help for her, because she was considered too young to treat.

Every humanitarian worker interviewed for the Amnesty report said that psychosocial services and programmes currently available to Yazidi children fall far short of meeting their long-term, specialist needs. I have heard this replicated in every conflict setting I have visited in nearly 20 years with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

To be clear, the lack of services flows from the failure of the international community to provide the funds to make this possible, as well as a lack of political will. Sexual and gender-based violence is the most chronically underfunded sector of the humanitarian appeals of the United Nations, receiving less than 1 per cent of humanitarian assistance. Just think how many lives could be saved if we even simply doubled that percentage.

I pay tribute to all the humanitarian workers, medics, lawyers and human rights defenders doing everything in their power to help survivors around the world, often with next to no support. But my concern and my question to the Council is this: If we are not able to live up to our promise of a survivor-centred approach for Yazidi children, who make up just one relatively small group of survivors, then how many more children and young adults are suffering in silence at the global level? And how many more will suffer because of violence exacerbated by the coronavirus disease and a distracted international community? The answer is, we do not know.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has said that sexual violence crimes against children — which are only one of the ways that children’s rights are being violated globally — are “vastly underreported”. The Secretary-General’s report on conflict-related sexual violence last year described a “disturbing trend ... of sexual violence perpetrated against very young girls and boys (*S/2019/280, para. 18*) in multiple countries. It added that girls and boys are targeted

“in order to terrorize their communities, because of perceived affiliations of their parents or their perceived utility or market value.” (*supra*)

Nobel laureate Dr. Mukwege speaks of treating babies as young as six months old in his hospital for rape victims.

For all the efforts that have been made, we live in a world where child survivors of these crimes — and violence of all kinds — live with stigma and the fear of retaliation at the hands of powerful perpetrators; where, in some countries, rape is not illegal and girls are forced to marry their rapists; and where survivors face an endless cycle of denial of their rights, as well as stigma and ostracization — lasting decades after the conflict has ended, as in Bosnia and Herzegovina or Uganda, and passed down across the generations, to innocent children. More often than not, in many settings, including Syria and Myanmar today, not a single perpetrator of alleged systematic conflict-related sexual violence has been held to account. These are all choices, the choices of United Nations Member States, our choices.

We have to be prepared to admit where we have failed, and do the hard work to support survivors, change laws and attitudes and bring perpetrators to account, over many years. Resolution 2467 (2019) also promised sanctions, justice and reparations for victims, and recognition for children born of rape. These are all promises that must be kept.

I urge the Council to recommit to these promises today: to move beyond rhetoric and to implement their decisions. Please hold perpetrators to account. Please address the root, structural causes of gender-based violence and discrimination in your countries. And please urgently increase funding for programmes that address the needs of all survivors, and especially the invisible victims — children.



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**Annex 3****Statement by the Founder and Chair of Progressive Voice on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Khin Ohmar**

I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to speak to the Security Council today and deliver this statement on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

For over 30 years, I have advocated for democracy, human rights, gender equality and peace in my country, Myanmar. I have met with countless survivors of the unspeakable crimes committed by Myanmar's military against minoritized ethnic and religious communities. I stand here today in solidarity with my sisters and brothers still waiting for justice.

Myanmar's military has long used rape as a weapon of war against ethnic communities. The horrific accounts of Rohingya women during the 2016 and 2017 so-called "clearance operations" remain urgent, shocking and unique in their ferocity. They are also representative of the military's pattern of using gender-based violence in their campaigns against other ethnic communities, including the Kachin, Shan, Ta'ang and Rakhine.

These facts are well known. Ethnic women's organizations, international organizations and the United Nations have all documented the military's systematic and persistent use of rape as a weapon. One of the first comprehensive pieces of documentation of the military's use of rape as a weapon of war was produced nearly 20 years ago by the Shan Women's Action Network, which detailed incidents of sexual violence committed by Myanmar's military against 625 Shan women and girls. Of the rapes that were documented, 61 per cent were gang rapes and 25 per cent resulted in death. Women were detained and raped repeatedly for months. Conflict in Shan state continues today. Similar findings by Kachin, Karen and Ta'ang women's organizations, as well as by the Women's League of Burma, an umbrella organization composed of 13 ethnic women's groups that I co-founded, corroborate many of these findings. These organizations have unequivocally concluded that sexual violence is part of a deliberate, systematic pattern to target ethnic women and girls.

This fact was confirmed last year by the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, which found that "sexual violence was a hallmark of the Tatmadaw's military operations" (*A/HRC/42/CRP.4, para. 2*). The Fact-finding Mission further documented systematic and widespread sexual and gender-based violence against Rohingya women and girls, transgender persons, as well as men and boys, in the three waves of violence that ultimately brutally uprooted over 800,000 Rohingya from their land and homes. The Fact-finding Mission stated that the use of rape and sexual and gender-based violence against the Rohingya "was part of a deliberate, well-planned strategy to intimidate, terrorise and punish a civilian population and force them to flee." (*ibid., para. 72*) It concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that these acts "constituted crimes against humanity, war crimes, and underlying acts of genocide accompanied by inferences of genocidal intent." (*supra*)

Despite this well-documented pattern of the use of sexual and gender-based violence and the Government signing a joint communiqué with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in December 2018, Myanmar continues to deny that such crimes are taking place at every opportunity. It rejected allegations of rape as "wild claims" in its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2019

(CEDAW/C/MMR/EP/1, para. 11) and ignored sexual violence against the Rohingya entirely at the International Court of Justice hearings in December 2019. Myanmar's Independent Commission of Enquiry also categorically dismissed rape and sexual violence in its final report in January 2020, furthering the impunity accorded to the military for this crime. As Professor Philippe Sands, a lawyer for the Gambia, told the International Court of Justice last winter, Myanmar's "silence says far more than [its] words."

The Fact-finding Mission also noted that sexual and gender-based violence is being carried out within the broader context of endemic and structural gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls across all levels of society, and that the "net result is a climate of impunity that enables sexual and gender-based violence to continue unabated." This impunity permeates every corner of the domestic legal system and judiciary and is grounded in a Constitution that further entrenches it. Investigations, if they have even begun, are blocked, and witnesses are threatened or even targeted for violence in order to silence them. And when there are convictions, they are exceedingly rare, often not for sexual violence and the penalties are not commensurate with the gravity of the acts committed.

This was seen in the case of two Kachin schoolteachers who, in 2015, were tortured, raped and murdered in northern Shan state. The primary suspect was a commanding officer in a local Myanmar military contingent; yet at every turn, efforts to seek justice were thwarted. Independent investigations were blocked by the highest levels of Government. The Kachin community is still seeking justice.

Civil society has consistently called for addressing the egregious structural gaps in the domestic justice and legal system without any progress. A law on violence against women that took over seven years to draft, which failed to consult meaningfully with women, particularly from conflict-affected communities, and fails to meet Myanmar's international obligations, was only recently submitted to Parliament to debate. Further, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, which falls short of meeting the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, has exhibited a lack of will to investigate violations carried out by members of the military.

Despite the coronavirus pandemic and the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, the conflict in Myanmar has reached an intensity not seen in decades; as recently as late June, the military announced clearance operations against the ethnic Rakhine and the Arakan Army in western Myanmar. The conflict has resulted in widespread displacement and human rights abuses, including restrictions on access to the Internet. The situation of displaced Rohingya, Kaman, Rakhine, Chin and other ethnic communities, which was already dire, has been exacerbated by the restrictions enacted in response to the pandemic. Barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health care have only grown, compounding the already life-threatening lack of services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and putting such services even further out of reach for women and girls from marginalized ethnic communities.

Serious international crimes continue to be committed throughout Myanmar, but particularly in Rakhine state, by the same perpetrators who committed genocide against the Rohingya. Yet no one is being held to account as the military continues to act with total impunity. As the Fact-finding Mission has repeatedly said, domestic accountability is not possible in Myanmar. Neither does the country have an effective national framework for protecting women's rights or upholding gender equality.

Unless the international community acts now, these human rights abuses will continue and could have lasting consequences. The lives of thousands of survivors



of violence by Myanmar's military and those of their families are potentially forever changed by long-term disabilities from conflict-related wounds. The confiscation of land, compounded by patriarchal land-owning practices, Government-led development plans and the encroachment of business interests, means that women's dispossession risks becoming permanent.

I therefore urge the Security Council to refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC), or create an ad hoc international tribunal to more fully investigate the crimes suffered by the Rohingya, as well as those against other ethnic communities, beyond the ICC's current, limited investigation. In addition, the international community, including the Security Council, must make a concerted effort to ensure that Myanmar complies with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice. Far more action is needed to ensure that discriminatory laws are repealed, citizenship is restored to the Rohingya and restrictions on the freedom of movement and humanitarian access are lifted. These are the necessary preconditions for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of the Rohingya.

I commend the brave efforts by the Fact-finding Mission and the former Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar to draw attention to atrocities against all ethnic and religious communities. However, as the Rosenthal inquiry, which examined the United Nations failure to halt atrocities, rightly recognized, it is vital that the United Nations see this moment as a key turning point — when such lessons are finally learned — and speaks in a united, decisive and principled voice that prioritizes human rights to ensure that there is never another “systemic failure”, such as the one in 2017.

Unfortunately, to date, the recommendations of the Rosenthal report have not resulted in any observable changes from the United Nations system. In this regard, I urge the Special Envoy to resist the Government's dangerous nationalist and divisive narrative and not to lend legitimacy to the National Verification Card process that aims to deny the Rohingya's very existence.

I am not the first woman from Myanmar to speak before the Council. My Rohingya sister Razia Sultana addressed Council members (see S/PV.8234) at this very debate in April 2018. In addition, many of my brave ethnic sisters have repeatedly called on the international community to act on behalf of other ethnic communities. The Karen, the Kachin, the Rohingya, the Rakhine and others have all faced great suffering at the hands of the Tatmadaw. Who is next? Who else must come before the Council to urge it to hold the Myanmar military to account?

As women human rights defenders and community leaders from different ethnic backgrounds, we will continue to work together for a peaceful, democratic Myanmar. This is a decisive moment in our history, ahead of national elections this year. We urge the Council to support our efforts for peace, justice and accountability, which serve all the people of Myanmar.

**Annex 4****Statement by the Executive President of the Association of Central African Women Lawyers, Nadia Carine Therese Fornel-Poutou**

I am Nadia Carine Therese Fornel-Poutou, Executive President of the Association of Central African Women Lawyers. Our organization works for the protection of human rights and the care of sexual and gender-based violence survivors by providing legal assistance, psychosocial support and medical referrals. Among other ways, this is provided through our so-called “listening centres”, where paralegals and psychosocial workers aim to improve the accountability of perpetrators and help survivors coping with their traumatic experience — for example, through psychosocial support. As an active member of civil society, I have several years of professional experience in the promotion and defence of the rights of women and children, the fight against impunity and the legal treatment of gender-based violence in the Central African Republic.

I would like to thank the German Government for this opportunity to share some thoughts on the situation regarding sexual violence in the Central African Republic. I hope that my statement will encourage all those present to continue our important work to put an end to these horrific practices.

To understand the situation we face on a daily basis in the Central African Republic, I would like to share the story of one of the women and girls we supported over the past few years.

“I am 17 years old. I grew up in Bangui. In 2013, the Séléka entered the city. Four men arrived at our home, while I was there with my mother and my little sister. They were tall and dressed in military garb, their faces veiled by black cloth. One of them asked where the men of the family had gone. My mother replied that there were no men left. They slapped my mother and walked up to my little sister and threw her to the ground. While she was crying, one of the soldiers ripped off her clothes and brutally pushed her to the ground. As I watched with tears in my eyes, their leader said they should do the same thing to me. I was in a lot of pain and despite my screams they did not stop. The pain in my belly lasted a month. I was taken to the hospital in Bimbo, where I was told that I was pregnant but the child had died in my belly.”

In 2019, the total number of gender-based violence cases managed and recorded by organizations working on sexual and gender-based violence in the Central African Republic was 13,028 cases, among which 12,249 involved females, compared to 779 cases concerning males. Physical assaults, rape and sexual violence accounted for half of the cases.

Among the sexual and gender-based violence cases recorded by the Association of Central African Women Lawyers, 15 per cent concern men and 85 per cent women. This is potentially an underrepresentation of men, who are even more stigmatized when they fall victim to these crimes. These serious human rights violations are rooted in conflicts and prevailing gender and sociocultural norms.

For more than two decades, the Central African Republic has faced repeated armed conflicts, with disastrous consequences for the population, not to mention widespread sexual violence, mainly committed against women and girls. The perpetrators are mostly members of armed groups. Often, they target people based on their ethnic or religious background, or because their area of residence is supposedly populated by rival militias. In some cases, the security forces that are deployed

to protect civilians, both national and international, also commit such atrocities, deepening public distrust of these security forces.

Survivors are of all ages, including children under 10 years of age. Rape is often committed by multiple perpetrators, sometimes as many as 20 per person, in public, in front of family and community members, ripping apart the social fabric. In addition to the security and socioeconomic consequences of the conflict throughout the country, the civilian population in general, and women and children in particular, are affected by serious human rights violations, such as the confiscation and occupation of land and the recruitment of children into armed groups.

Since the beginning of the crisis, protection services have been either dysfunctional or absent entirely.

Measures have been taken by the Government with the support of the international community, including the creation and establishment of a State structure, the Joint Rapid Intervention and Repression Unit for Sexual Violence against Women and Children, and the creation and operationalization of the Special Criminal Court. The reform of the justice sector contributes to the restoration of the authority of the State and the confidence of the population in the justice system.

Similarly, the Government is attempting to implement resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009), which recognize and condemn rape as a weapon of war and a crime against humanity.

The issue of security remains a major concern for true and fair justice in the Central African Republic, where perpetrators and survivors of these crimes live side by side in the community. Impunity cannot be fought in a context of insecurity, nor can we talk about justice in a context where weapons circulate freely.

We ask the members of the Security Council to ensure that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic will effectively ensure the protection of civilians against serious violations of international humanitarian law, as stipulated in its mandate and strengthen the Central African Armed Forces and the internal security forces so as to ensure their effectiveness, inclusiveness and accountability, especially on sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse violations.

Secondly, we ask members of the Security Council to support local civil society organizations by strengthening their efforts — in particular those of women's rights organizations — for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in their economic empowerment and reintegration into society; consulting local organizations in a meaningful way so as to improve and ensure access to United Nations mechanisms for the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence; and strengthening investments in holistic care for survivors, for example, by investing in funding for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and access to justice.

Thirdly, we ask members of the Security Council to support the development of the judicial system by strengthening the Joint Rapid Intervention and Repression Unit, which fights sexual and gender-based violence, so that it is autonomous and able to objectively handle the cases submitted to it; supporting the ordinary national courts and the Special Criminal Court by encouraging them to consider cases of conflict-related sexual violence with the utmost attention and ensure the protection of survivors and witnesses throughout the judicial process; and, finally, advocating for conflict-related sexual violence to be given special attention by all transitional justice mechanisms, judicial and non-judicial alike. Survivors, in particular, need a

functioning, effective and gender-sensitive justice system and other mechanisms to bring perpetrators to justice and provide reparations to survivors.

Lastly, the Council must inquire about the efforts of the peacekeeping mission, in line with its solid women and peace and security mandate, to address this critical gap in services and justice for survivors and to ensure the equal and meaningful participation of women in the peace and electoral processes, including in the implementation of the peace agreement and in the upcoming presidential election.

We look forward to working together for a future without sexual violence in the Central African Republic.

**Annex 5****Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence of Belgium, Philippe Goffin**

[Original: English and French]

In recent years, the international community has taken important steps to address the problem of conflict-related sexual violence. However, in his annual report (S/2020/487), the Secretary-General once again reports a large number of cases of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict areas. In addition, a large number of abuses go unreported due to fear and stigmatization of victims or restricted access.

The coronavirus disease pandemic further exacerbates the situation. In many places, the crisis has resulted in reduced social control, more difficult access to assistance or judicial authorities, and obstacles to sexual and reproductive rights.

Belgium thanks Germany for organizing this important debate. We also thank the briefers. Their statements remind us that the current situation requires additional efforts and renewed commitment.

I would like to address three points: the importance of a survivor-centred approach, the need for effective implementation of our commitments, and the need to address the root causes of sexual violence.

First, survivors of sexual violence are not a homogenous group. Whether boys raped in the Central African Republic, sex slaves of Da'esh or mothers of children born out of violence in South Sudan, survivors all have their own stories. They all need tailor-made solutions. They need justice, access to health-care services, psychosocial support, meaningful reparations or socioeconomic support to reintegrate into society.

Although the issue of reparations after conflict-related sexual violence has received increasing global attention, the actual provision of reparations remains, unfortunately, an exception. Yet efforts to provide reparations to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have had positive effects in Colombia. The same goes for Iraq, where a relief programme for survivors saw initial grants disbursed last year.

We must learn from the experiences of survivors to better prevent further violations; better recognize early-warning, signs such as discrimination, hate speech and incitement to violence; and improve the gathering of evidence, and Belgium welcomes the draft Murad code in this regard.

My second point is on the effective implementation of the commitments. The level of compliance with Security Council resolutions remains low — too low. The figures speak for themselves; no more than one State actor has been removed from the list annexed to the annual report since its inception, while 71 per cent of the parties having made no commitment have been on the list for more than five years.

What survivors want, though, is an end to impunity. They want justice.

Documenting crimes is an essential step. We commend the efforts of the Special Representative in this regard. The presence of women protection advisers on the ground has also contributed to improving the quantity and quality of information. Let us safeguard the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence.

Access to justice is also crucial. However, such access in conflict areas is often insufficient due to inadequate normative frameworks, the limited capacity

of rule-of-law institutions or a lack of trust in State actors, who themselves may perpetrate violence. Belgium supports and commends the work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in that regard. In the Central African Republic, for example, the experts contributed to the organization of a session of the Bangui Court of Appeals on sexual and gender-based violence cases.

The Security Council can also act directly. In all its resolutions on sexual violence, it refers to the instrument of targeted sanctions against parties committing sexual violence. To date, however, no perpetrator has ever been targeted by sanctions for acts of sexual violence. What is the point of our intentions if they are not translated into concrete action to the benefit of survivors?

Crimes of sexual violence will stop only if we address the root causes of sexual violence. Let us therefore work together for gender equality, for the genuine participation of women in peace processes, for the inclusion of women's empowerment at the heart of prevention measures, for increased support for women's organizations and human rights defenders, and for greater efforts to further pursue the path set out by resolution 1325 (2000).

A decade after the first United Nations report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2010/181), sustained action and continued political pressure are still needed to change the situation. Ending sexual violence against women and girls and ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights are also key elements of the Belgian National Action Plan on women and peace and security. I wish to reconfirm, here and today, our continued commitment. Belgium, the European Union and the United Nations remain partners in this important fight.



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**Annex 6****Statement by the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany,  
Heiko Maas**

Today, we are talking about a pandemic — a global virus much older than the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) but equally devastating. Sexual and gender-based violence in conflicts has been destroying lives and communities for years, with no vaccine in sight.

Twenty years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and more than a year since the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), progress remains painfully slow. Rape, forced prostitution and sexual slavery continue to be used as weapons in conflicts around the globe. I can only commend the courage and strength of our briefers in speaking up and sharing their experiences with us. I thank them very much.

We have all heard how COVID-19 is making survivors' situations even worse. Lockdowns are restricting survivors' access to medical and legal services. The underreporting of sexual violence has become even more alarming. And while we are able to uphold safe distances between us, many women, girls and boys cannot escape the brutal proximity of their tormentors.

Today's debate is therefore overdue. And I want to thank the Dominican Republic for co-organizing it with us. As co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, our message is clear. Implementing the women and peace and security agenda, including resolution 2467 (2019), is a duty for all of us and for the Security Council — even more so in the era of COVID-19. Four points will be key.

First, we need to ensure that survivors get the medical and judicial assistance they deserve. As an example, Germany is working closely with the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Together, we are defending survivors' sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to medical services and reparations.

Secondly, women must play a central role in peacebuilding. Without gender equality and human rights, lasting peace and reconciliation remain impossible. Germany therefore supports such non-governmental organizations as Together We Build It in Libya, which promotes the political participation of women in the peace process.

Thirdly, sanctions can and must play a greater role in ending sexual violence. The two United Nations listings brought forward since 2019 can only be a first step.

Fourthly, impunity must end. Perpetrators must be brought to justice. We support creative solutions, such as the mobile courts in South Sudan, which put rapists around the country on trial. And I am glad to report that in Koblenz, Germany, a court recently opened the world's first trial against two former officials of the Syrian regime, on charges of torture and sexual assault.

These examples show that, while we may not have a vaccine against the pandemic of sexual violence, we are certainly not powerless. What we need to do is act on the commitments we made in resolution 2467 (2019) to protect and empower survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and to place them at the heart of our actions.

**Annex 7****Statement by the Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Nalendi Pandor**

I would like to thank the Federal Republic of Germany for convening today's open debate on "Women and peace and security: sexual violence in conflict". The theme for the debate, "Turning commitments into compliance", is important to note, as our focus must continue to be on implementing the commitments we have made to address sexual violence in conflict.

South Africa wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his detailed annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487), which forms the basis for our deliberations today.

This open debate serves as a useful monitoring mechanism to assess the progress made in addressing the scourge of sexual violence in armed conflict situations and the challenges that continue to require the attention of the international community.

Armed conflict situations across the world have had a devastating effect on women and girls due, in particular, to their unequal status in society. One traumatic crime to which women and girls are vulnerable is sexual violence committed by parties to armed conflict as a means of advancing their political, social and economic objectives.

Over the years, global awareness about the effects of armed conflict on women has increased, owing primarily to the adoption in 2000 of the groundbreaking resolution 1325 (2000) and all other subsequent resolutions and decisions on women, peace and security. Through those outcomes, the Security Council has recognized, and correctly so, that sexual violence as a tactic of war, when used systematically to achieve military or political ends, constitute a threat to international peace and security.

Regrettably, sexual violence continues to occur in most conflict and post-conflict situations, which remains a subject of grave concern for my country and must be so to for the Council. Ending that scourge, addressing the resulting trauma and stigma, and holding accountable those responsible for committing these heinous acts, as well as attending to the needs of the victims and survivors, should remain our priority.

While the situation of women and girls, particularly those in conflict situations, remains desperate and unacceptable, we must not view women and girls as simply passive victims, but members of society with voices and competence. We must deepen our efforts to systematically change perceptions about women and girls and acknowledge their resilience, self-empowerment and the meaningful role they can play as agents of change and transformation.

South Africa therefore recognizes that sexual violence is inextricably linked to gender inequality. We must continue to strongly advocate for the equal participation and full involvement of women in all processes in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

The onus is on Member States to continually look at measures to strengthen the full and effective implementation of all Security Council decisions, including the recommendations of the 2015 global study pertaining to women, peace and security, in line with resolution 2493 (2019), unanimously adopted in October at an open debate on women and peace and security that emphasized the imperative of implementing all Council decisions on women, peace and security. Our thematic discussion today on converting commitments into compliance resonates with and reaffirms that urgent call.

South Africa commends and reiterates its support for the efforts of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict towards ending sexual violence in armed conflict situations. The work of the Office has become more important amid the myriad challenges brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) global pandemic, particularly for women and children, internally displaced people, refugees and migrants. It is also thanks to the Office that we are able to monitor and express our concern about the reported rise of sexual and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. We therefore reiterate the Secretary-General's call that addressing gender-based violence is also integral to COVID-19 responses.

While policies have been put in place to mitigate the scourge of sexual violence, implementation is, unfortunately, lagging. There is still room for improvement in strengthening rule-of-law institutions and capacities at the national level to hold accountable perpetrators of that heinous crime.

Measures taken to ensure accountability from perpetrators of sexual violence, such as prohibiting States listed for violations from participating in United Nations peace operations and making sexual violence a designation criterion in sanctions regimes, should continue to be implemented consistently across all country situations.

While we recognize the constraints of reporting only on situations of concern, we would appreciate receiving reports on more than merely the 19 situations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/487). Conflict situations in Palestine and Western Sahara, for example, where human rights violations are prevalent and women are affected by ongoing hostilities, should not escape our scrutiny. That will ensure that there is no selectivity or bias in reporting and will maintain the objective credibility of United Nations processes.

As Member States, we must do our part to mitigate some of the serious negative impacts of sexual violence, such as stigmatization, discrimination, rejection and social exclusion. Such efforts require sustainable and predictable funding. There should therefore be consistent funding for programmes aimed at combating sexual and gender-based violence in conflict situations, including for ensuring the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights, easy access to services for victims and survivors of sexual violence — such as clinical treatment for rape and medical, psychosocial and legal services — as well as reintegration support for victims and survivors.

This is a significant year as we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, among others. It is also the review year for the Silencing the Guns initiative on the African continent.

Those commemorations will be hollow if we do not take steps to fulfil their objectives and implement the ideals and commitments that we have made by adopting those landmark outcomes. In that regard, South Africa underscores the need for enhanced cooperation through better information sharing, coordination and cooperation between the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, as well as with civil society and women's organizations to advance the course of women's rights and empowerment.

This meeting is convened a day before Nelson Mandela International Day, which will mark the one-hundred-and-second birthday of former President Nelson Mandela, who once stated that freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. In that spirit, let us all do our part in charting the path for justice for the women and children of today and of the future.

**Annex 8****Statement by the Minister for the Advancement of Women and Child Protection of the Niger, Elback Zeinabou Tari Bako**

[Original: English and French]

It is an honour for me to address the Council during this open debate on conflict-related sexual violence. The theme of this meeting is more than relevant in a global context characterized by an upsurge in gender-based violence, in general, and conflict-related sexual violence, in particular.

As if wars were not devastating enough, thousands of people suffer inhuman sexual violence in times of conflict, committed as a strategy of war, political repression, torture and terror. The Secretary-General's report on this issue (S/2020/487) confirms that sad reality. It is an issue that concerns us all and must be combated. That is why the Niger welcomes this important meeting and thanks Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the civil society representatives for their insightful briefings.

Speaking on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Denis Mukwege reminded us that such acts cause the disintegration of the social fabric and compromise any prospect of lasting peace.

I would like to draw the attention of the Security Council and its member States to the particular situation of increased vulnerability faced by people in the Sahel region. For some years now, the tri-border area and the Lake Chad basin have faced a situation of insecurity exacerbated by several factors, such as the presence of armed terrorist groups, the proliferation of small arms, the lack of socioeconomic opportunities, community tensions and the exclusion of young girls and boys from decision-making spheres.

It has been noted that violence against women and girls is experiencing an unprecedented upsurge, particularly in the regions of Diffa and Tillbéri, where women and girls are suffering severe hardships. These acts constitute a violation of their human rights.

In the Lake Chad basin region, terrorist groups such as Boko Haram are abducting girls and women and forcibly integrating them into the ranks of combatants. Forced marriages, sexual slavery and economic exploitation have become the daily lot of these victims. We all remember the abduction of the Chibok and Dapchi girls from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College in Nigeria and the less publicized but equally painful abduction of the women of N'galewa in the Niger. During the first quarter of 2020, in the region of Diffa, 54 kidnapping incidents were recorded, resulting in the abduction of 144 people, including 48 women and 29 children.

The Niger calls on all States Members of the United Nations to support the reintegration of victims of sexual violence related to armed conflict in accordance with the survivor-centred approach advocated in resolution 2467 (2019). That approach is all the more important as it considers the context of each case. In most of our communities, these acts of sexual violence are difficult to monitor because they are rarely reported, either because the competent services do not exist or because families, subjected to strong sociocultural burdens, are afraid of social stigmatization. Victims suffer in silence.

That work of caring for victims of sexual violence cannot be done adequately without contextual data. That is why my ministerial department conducted a study in 2015 on the extent and determinants of gender-based violence in the Niger.

Our research revealed that in the Niger, 53 per cent of the population is or has been subjected to gender-based violence in the course of their lives. Children constitute an important fringe of people affected by such violence, including child marriage. The national prevalence rate of gender-based violence is 28.4 per cent, while the prevalence rate of violence against women is 60 per cent. Women and girls are therefore more likely to be victims of gender-based violence in the Niger.

Emergency situations and humanitarian crises linked to natural disasters and the resulting population displacements increase the vulnerability of women and girls. In the early stages of a disaster, those vulnerable groups may be exposed to specific risks, such as separation from their families, which can make them vulnerable to trafficking, abduction and sexual assault.

Cognizant of the fact that such violence is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of peace, sustainable development and the promotion of human rights, our country has taken legislative, legal, institutional and administrative measures to address it.

Among other things, the Niger has made combating violence against women and girls a national priority enshrined in the Constitution of 25 November 2010. In 2010, our country also adopted an ordinance on combating trafficking in persons, particularly women and children. Undoubtedly, the adoption of the National Gender Policy and the National Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Gender-based Violence in 2017 was a decisive step in the implementation of the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) and the women and peace and security agenda.

We attach great importance to the holistic care of survivors of sexual violence, especially in the areas most affected by the security crisis. To that end, we have established centres in the regions of Diffa and Tillbéri. People there in situations of forced displacement are particularly vulnerable because displaced populations, the majority of whom are women and children, often have fewer opportunities and access to basic services, which can expose them to various forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

One of the most effective ways to address conflict-related sexual violence is prevention, including access to quality education. In that regard, the Niger has set up centres for the prevention, promotion and protection of children, which carry out preventive activities in the areas of behaviour change, communication and the handling of cases of victims of gender-based violence.

Furthermore, while our country has made significant progress in the area of education, due to the conflict, attacks on education and schools are increasingly becoming a cause for concern. We must protect access to education, especially for girls. That is a sure way to address the root causes of sexual violence, including gender discrimination, the lack of economic opportunities and toxic masculinities. Access to education can contribute to sustainable poverty reduction, address gender inequalities and, simply, promote dignity. The Niger has signed the Safe Schools Declaration and we call on all Member States that have not yet signed it to do the same.

In conclusion, the Niger would like to make some additional recommendations:

First, with regard to the adoption of a survivor-centred approach, it is important that Member States establish or strengthen their legal and judicial assistance beyond

the health, psychological, social and economic dimensions. The National Agency for Legal and Judicial Assistance in the Niger is a perfect example.

Secondly, that approach must be contextual and include community outreach activities that consider traditional care mechanisms. Civil society in the Niger is doing remarkable work in that regard, in collaboration with local authorities and women's organizations.

Thirdly, implementation cannot take place without reliable and disaggregated data on conflict-related sexual violence. This step is important to ensure more effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, on which we are reflecting deeply at this critical juncture for this agenda.

Finally, in conflict zones, it is essential that Member States ensure that acts of sexual violence are investigated and perpetrators are held to account. Member States should, therefore, intensify the training of national defence and security forces on gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence.

Our country, as a troop contributor, calls for greater efforts to ensure that these issues are taken into account in peace operations and processes, including through the strengthening of early warning systems.

In a global context marked by the coronavirus disease pandemic, gender-based violence, including sexual violence, is unfortunately on the rise. The Niger reiterates its commitment to combat gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence.



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**Annex 9****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

China commends the German presidency for hosting this morning's open debate. I thank Special Representative Pramila Patten and Special Envoy Angelina Jolie for their briefings. I also thank civil society representatives for their presentations.

The year 2020 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, and the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). It is an important moment to reflect upon and renew our commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as to the women and peace and security agenda.

Throughout the years, many actions have been taken to advance the development of women and girls across economic, social, political and peace and security domains. Meanwhile, gaps remain between words and actions and between ambition and reality. Women and girls are still bearing the brunt of wars, are suffering the most from terrorism and displacement and are at particular risk of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. China strongly condemns sexual violence in conflict, especially the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terror. Taking the opportunity afforded me today, I would like to highlight three points.

First, all countries should work together to build a peaceful and prosperous world free from conflict. As the Secretary-General pointed out in his recent report (S/2020/487), the ultimate goal of the conflict-related sexual violence agenda is not war without sexual violence, but a world without war. The best and most effective way to protect women, girls and other vulnerable groups from sexual violence is to prevent conflicts from happening and to resolve those conflicts by peaceful means.

The international community therefore needs to redouble its efforts aimed at preserving peace for development, promoting development for peace and addressing the root causes of armed conflicts. The Security Council should effectively implement its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security by promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue, mediation and negotiation and by ensuring the timely and complete implementation of the resolutions it has adopted. In this context, we reiterate our strong support for Secretary-General Guterres' appeal for a global ceasefire and urge all parties to conflicts to heed this appeal and realize a general and immediate cessation of hostilities.

Secondly, a holistic approach is needed to promote gender equality, advance women's empowerment and address sexual violence in conflict. The spirit of the women and peace and security agenda is recognizing women not only as victims of war but as contributors to peace with strength and expertise. Gender equality and women's empowerment are key to this transformation and for women to fulfil their potential.

We need to intensify efforts on gender equality, remove structural disparities, eliminate discrimination and stereotypes and ensure women's equal access to education, health care and decent work. We also need to move faster on the empowerment of women, lift them out of poverty, increase their representation and leadership in decision-making and strengthen their role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

As the Secretary-General observed in his report, sexual violence in conflict does not occur in a vacuum; it is often linked with such factors as the resurgence of hostilities, a collapse of the rule of law, mass displacement, the rise of terrorism and violent extremism and so on. We need to adopt a holistic and comprehensive approach in combating sexual violence in conflict, while making sure that the

proposed solutions take all aspects — economic, political, counter-terrorism, security and humanitarian — into consideration. Our response must tackle both immediate threats and long-term consequences and should be carried out in a coordinated and integrated manner.

Thirdly, we need to join hands to eliminate sexual violence in conflict while respecting national sovereignty and ownership. Building on the existing normative and institutional framework, we must support actions on preventing and deterring sexual violence at national, regional and international levels. We must do our best to protect and assist survivors, always prioritizing their needs and rights, and hold the perpetrators accountable. To this end, the countries concerned bear the primary responsibility. As almost all Governments whose national forces listed in the Secretary-General's report have assumed formal commitments in this regard, it is time to fill the gap between commitments and implementation. The international community should step up its assistance to relevant countries for national capacity-building. In the meantime, national sovereignty, jurisdictional and legal systems and the principle of non-interference into other countries' internal affairs must be fully respected.

United Nations bodies — including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and UN-Women — special representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General and United Nations missions on the ground should work within their respective mandates and intensify coordination to create synergy. Any mechanism operating in the name of the Security Council should follow the Council's rules and practice. Regional and subregional organizations are well informed of local context and can therefore play an important role and provide customized suggestions.

As the host country of the Fourth World Conference on Women, China is firmly committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. We will continue to work closely with the international community to advance the women and peace and security agenda, eliminate sexual violence in conflict and build a peaceful and prosperous world where all women and girls can reach their full potential for development.

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**Annex 10****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

We thank all briefers for their presence and briefings.

We also thank the Secretary-General for his report, while noting with alarm, again, his description of the

“global security environment in which sexual violence remains a cruel tactic of war, torture, terror and political repression, and a brutally effective tool of displacement and dehumanization.” (*S/2020/487, para 3*)

We note with particular concern the attacks against women human rights defenders and political activists aimed aimed at silencing their voices in peace processes.

The Secretary-General’s reports and their annexes presented to the Security Council over the years have in clear and grim detail laid out the information on conflict-related sexual violence. We are alarmed that 70 per cent of the listed parties are persistent perpetrators who have appeared in the list for years and with impunity. We believe this information should feed into all Council discussions. Despite the increased focus and documentation, there is accountability for sexual violence in only a fraction of cases. This means that one of our most powerful tools for preventing sexual violence is not used. All over the world, discriminatory social norms and stigmatization prevent survivors from reporting cases of sexual violence and accessing information or services. This needs to be changed.

In Iraq and Syria, in recent years, thousands of women and girls have been abducted and forced into sexual slavery. In Iraq, there are still no indictments for sexual violence committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. No perpetrators have been prosecuted for sexual violence in Syria. In Myanmar, there has been no accountability despite the recommendations of the Independent International Fact-finding Mission, which found that sexual violence was a hallmark of the Tatmadaw’s operations in 2016 and 2017.

We strongly support the Security Council mechanisms on sexual violence in conflict, including field-based monitoring, reporting by the Secretary-General and the Special Representative, and the work of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. We underline the importance of sufficient funding for women protection advisers. We note with concern the challenges posed to this monitoring and reporting by the coronavirus disease and call on the United Nations peace operations to maintain its focus on sexual violence. We welcome the inclusion of sexual violence as a designation criterion for the Council sanctions committees and support its application in practice. We look forward to increased briefings to the committees by the Special Representative.

Estonia continues to support the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in its cooperation with national institutions to address impunity and support victims. We underline the role of international accountability mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, which, in an important step in 2019, found Bosco Ntaganda guilty for crimes against humanity, including rape and sexual slavery.

We support the elements in resolution 2467 (2019) describing a survivor-centred approach in responding to sexual violence. We believe it needs to be rights-based, responsive to the survivors’ needs and differentiated accordingly. Psychosocial and sexual and reproductive health services are an integral part of it.

We cannot address sexual violence without ensuring gender equality. The disempowerment of women and girls increases their risk of violence, but also leads to negative coping measures and restricts their access to assistance and justice.

We note with dismay the difficulties the Council continues to have in recognizing and addressing sexual violence in specific contexts, despite its clear condemnation of sexual violence in conflict. Overlooking this, we fail the survivors of violence, but we also fail in our principal task of maintaining peace and security. Sexual violence is a widespread and, at times, systemic feature of conflicts, and it can perpetuate the divisions and animosities driving conflict for years to come.

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**Annex 11****Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

I would like to thank our briefers today and pay particular tribute to civil society organizations for their action in the field. I also welcome the leadership of Germany and the Dominican Republic, co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, on this subject.

We share the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2020/487). Access to justice and basic health care for victims, including sexual- and reproductive-health services, are major challenges, particularly in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We regret the politicization of these issues to the detriment of women and girls. We strongly condemn the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terror with the aim of permanently traumatizing populations, thereby undermining all efforts to find a sustainable solution to crises.

The fight against impunity is the best deterrent. Those responsible for sexual violence must be systematically prosecuted and sentenced. This must be a priority at the national level. International justice also has a role to play in cases of mass atrocities. We support the work of the International Criminal Court in this regard.

Preventing sexual violence requires tackling gender inequalities. Sexual violence remains exacerbated by discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes. The rise of overtly sexist, misogynist and homophobic political discourse reinforces sexual and gender-based violence. The Security Council has clearly identified solutions to combat this scourge: when the participation of women at all levels of the decision-making process is ensured and real attention is paid to their economic and social emancipation, societies emerge reinforced from crises more just and equal.

Supporting survivors of sexual violence, including when court proceedings are inaccessible or blocked, is essential. This is why France has decided to grant €6.2 million to the Global Survivors Fund, spearheaded by the Nobel Laureates Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad. Such support must be comprehensive. To this end, France provided €5 million in funding for a project that empowers women by improving access to sexual- and reproductive-health services and tackles sexual violence in the Wadi Fira region in Chad.

The Special Representative's warning and documentation role is crucial. We will continue to support the inclusion of conflict-related sexual violence in country-specific resolutions and advocate for adequate resources for the teams on the ground.

We urgently need to transform commitments into compliance. France will do its part, including in the context of the Generation Equality Forum, which we will organize in partnership with Mexico, UN-Women and civil society.

**Annex 12****Statement by Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Dian Triansyah Djani**

Let me begin by thanking Germany for organizing today's meeting, as well as the Dominican Republic. I would also like to thank all the briefers for their particularly important and eye-opening briefings.

Indonesia is resolute in recognizing that conflict-related sexual violence is a crime against humanity. Despite a decade of concerted focus in the Security Council to end this crime, we are confronted with increasingly complex challenges to protect all survivors and their families, especially during the coronavirus disease pandemic. As clearly reported, the level of compliance by all parties to conflict remains low.

Against that backdrop, I would like to focus my statement on three fundamental points.

First, we must ensure accountability to fight against sexual violence. Strengthening the reach and capacity of national authorities is vital to facilitate access to justice and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.

The stigma of being victims of such heinous crimes often prevents them from coming forward and seeking justice. Therefore, by treating them as survivors — rather than simply as victims — will help national authorities to address this issue better.

We particularly commend some Governments' efforts to put in place a more protective legal and policy framework for women and children at risk. But much still needs to be done. In that regard, capacity-building must be proportional and responsive to survivors' needs in their reintegration process and to address the root causes of the culture of impunity.

Secondly, comprehensive resocialization and reintegration processes for survivors must be developed. Aside from justice, this agenda has a strong connection to access to health care and psychological support. Support for resocialization and reintegration has been even more urgent and challenging during this pandemic.

We have no option but to empower survivors to live their lives with dignity. We should provide assistance in terms of quality services, economic support, health-care services as well as legal assistance, so survivors may be seamlessly reintegrated into society. Promoting social reintegration and cohesion is important.

It is therefore critical to engage local communities, particularly religious leaders and women-led organizations, to mitigate stigma and fully reintegrate victims in society. Together, we can provide a reliable vehicle for enhancing community-level protection and response mechanisms.

Thirdly, meaningful women's participation to combat these crimes is necessary. Indonesia believes that the inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions may encourage victims to feel more secure working with them, and thereby help to eliminate sexual violence crimes.

Women peacekeepers are well positioned to win the hearts and minds of affected communities. We therefore strongly encourage troop- and police-contributing countries to incentivize the percentage of women military and police in deployment to peacekeeping operations.

Today there are 159 Indonesian women peacekeepers in various missions who have been trained to combat sexual violence in conflict at the Indonesian



Peacekeeping Operations Training Centre. We must do things concretely if we want to see progress.

Combating these crimes also requires women's participation as negotiators and mediators. Earlier this month, as a pathway to establishing a network in South-East Asia, Indonesia hosted a webinar on the role of women negotiators and mediators in the maintenance of regional peace and security. Practitioners across the region shared their views on enhancing the role and participation of women in peace processes.

Today's debate is about standing behind justice and equity. We stand behind the brave survivors of sexual violence. We stand up for their rights. Indonesia attaches great importance to efforts aimed at eliminating conflict-related sexual violence, focusing on a survivor-centred approach and fostering compliance with existing commitments. Keeping them in our hearts, we must put the survivors at the heart of our work.

**Annex 13****Statement by Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

Let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the invited briefers.

The Russian Federation strongly condemns all forms of violence against civilians in armed conflict, including sexual violence. We welcome the various multi-country initiatives and individual efforts designed to properly address this evil in any war. Russia therefore stands committed to international cooperation in this area.

We acknowledge the valuable contribution made by Special Representative Pramila Patten and her Office. We appreciate her assistance in strengthening national capacities to counter sexual violence and her dedication to developing dialogue, supporting victims and drawing public attention to the consequences of those heinous crimes.

Last year, at the open debate on the same subject under the German presidency, the Secretary-General said: “Despite all ... efforts, the reality on the ground has not changed. Sexual violence continues to be a horrific feature of conflicts around the world” (*S/PV.8514, p. 3*). That is true, but sexual violence is not a stand-alone phenomenon; it is a dirty but inalienable part of an armed conflict. It might be naïve for the international community to rely on sniping at one particular crime in a situation of ongoing armed conflict. The eradication of war crimes goes along with resolving armed conflict itself.

It is not possible to combat sexual violence without the active involvement of national authorities in this process. It is well recognized that the primary responsibility in protecting civilians in their territory is borne by Governments. Fighting impunity and ensuring accountability are the key parameters of a sovereign State. With increasing number of attacks by terrorist groups, including their use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, we need to intensify our efforts to address the threat of terrorism. Justice must prevail in the battlefield or be properly adjudicated, primarily in courts, where such crimes have been committed.

We need to act jointly and vigorously. We must avoid politicization of the topic. Any information submitted for the attention of the Security Council must be verified.

Speaking of human rights, it is important not to confuse the perspectives through which we address the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict. It is crucial to clearly distinguish between sexual violence as a war crime and sexual violence as criminal wrongdoing.

The Security Council has to remain within its mandate of maintaining peace and security. We do not honour attempts to expand the interpretation of the relevant scope pertaining to armed conflict and post-conflict situations that has been agreed and laid down in resolutions of the Security Council.

Finally, the United Nations and its affiliates must exhibit the highest standard of behaviour. The zero-tolerance policy on sexual violence has to be applicable to all, including peacekeeping missions. That also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the humanitarian actors and non-governmental organizations that are legally operating in countries affected by armed conflict.

The efficiency of the Security Council is directly linked to its ability to bridge different approaches by enhancing respectful dialogue and constructive cooperation. We are committed to acting accordingly in the interests of peace and supporting the victims of sexual violence and for the sake of building just societies.

**Annex 14****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

I would like to extend our welcome and appreciation to all Ministers for their statements.

We thank the German presidency and the Dominican Republic for co-hosting this important open debate.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2020/487), his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for her valuable briefing and other briefers for their insightful presentations.

As we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, it is saddening to see that the multiple consequences of sexual violence continue to persist despite increasing commitments and progress achieved.

Wars and conflicts affect everyone, but often women and children remain the ones to suffer the most from lasting psychological and physical impacts. Lacking access to education, livelihoods and economic opportunities, these victims are also easily subjected to stigmatization, human trafficking and armed group and terrorist recruitment, which further the cycle of violence and suffering.

Our response to conflict-related sexual violence requires a comprehensive approach of preventive and recovery measures, in addition to tackling its root causes arising from gender inequality. In this effort, we share the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that a survivor-centred approach is imperative, and remain concerned at existing gaps between commitments and the implementation of commitments by parties to conflict.

With that in mind, I would like to make the following points.

First, victims of sexual violence must be provided with essential recovery services, including health care, psychological support, vocational training, employment opportunities, legal aid and socioeconomic reintegration. These measures should be taken together with efforts to advance gender equality. We would like to highlight the importance of economic empowerment in enhancing women's recovery and capacity. States have the primary responsibility in this regard, but complementary assistance from the international community — particularly the United Nations agencies, programmes and peacekeeping missions — is equally crucial. This may include but is not limited to development assistance, capacity-building, technical support and training.

Secondly, women are not only victims but they are also the backbone of communities. The equal representation and full involvement of women in decision-making processes is a prerequisite to conflict prevention and addressing sexual violence in conflict. This would ensure that initiatives promoted could adequately address the needs and interests of victims, raise greater awareness and overcome stigmatization against those who suffer from sexual violence.

Thirdly, the international community should further strengthen cooperation and experience-sharing among countries and regions to allow for the more consistent and effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, as well as the conflict-related sexual violence aspect. We also call for a united and collective response to effectively implement existing normative frameworks to promote gender

equality and women's empowerment in the prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflicts.

The path to prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence requires both immediate actions and a long-term approach. In this pursuit, let us always be mindful of the perpetual suffering of victims, who are at increasing risk of being left behind, and of the indispensable role of women in all stages of peace processes. Moreover, in the face of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the protection and empowerment of women should be paid even more attention.

Viet Nam is committed to working closely with Member States and the relevant agencies of the United Nations in this endeavour.

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**Annex 15****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Argentina thanks Germany for organizing this open debate of the Security Council, and the Secretary General; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten; and the Executive President of the Association of Central African Women Lawyers, Ms. Nadia Carine Fornel-Poutou, for their briefings.

Argentina endorses the statement made by the delegation of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (see annex 20).

We express our appreciation for the efforts made in recent years by Member States, the United Nations, intergovernmental organizations and local and international civil society organizations to prevent and respond to sexual violence. We also continue to strongly support the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and reiterate our support for their work, firmly rooted in the women and peace and security agenda, originated in resolution 1325 (2000).

In the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we appreciate the report prepared by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the implications of the pandemic for the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. In particular, we share the concern regarding the impact of COVID-19 on sexual violence survivors' access to essential health and support services, and we consider it essential that measures be taken to guarantee access to justice and relevant protection.

Argentina categorically condemns acts of sexual violence in armed conflicts, supports efforts to prevent them and advocates accountability and punishment for perpetrators.

It is essential that the use or threat of sexual violence by various actors and armed groups — State and non-State alike — be prevented and punished. Such actions are among the most serious of crimes and must be fought in the framework of the law and with the range of tools and mechanisms available, including Security Council sanctions regimes, which should include sexual violence as a specific criterion for the imposition of sanctions and referral to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

Argentina endorses the Secretary-General's recommendations seeking to promote access to justice for victims, based on a holistic concept of justice focused on such victims. Ensuring the implementation of a survivor-centred prevention and response approach, in accordance with resolution 2467 (2019), is essential.

It is likewise crucial to forge greater cooperation and enhance the sharing of good practices on access to justice and accountability for crimes of sexual violence in order to end the climate of impunity that contributes to the proliferation of such crimes. It is therefore essential to establish mechanisms to protect, support, assist and reintegrate all survivors of such violations, in collaboration with women's organizations and other civil society organizations. Such assistance must meet the needs and protect the dignity and human rights of victims through measures to help eliminate the multiple forms of discrimination, marginalization and stigmatization they often suffer during the process of socioeconomic and cultural reintegration into their families. and communities of origin.

These elements must be taken into account when setting the mandates for peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as in the peacebuilding efforts of the Security Council, in the context of resolution 1325 (2000) and its follow-up resolutions.

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we firmly believe that national action plans for the implementation of that resolution should be seen as a tool for building peace and preventing sexual violence, especially in conflict situations. It was that spirit that inspired our country join the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network and support the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Initiatives, promoted by the Canadian Government, to ensure that more women are deployed in peace operations.

Argentina would like to highlight the importance of equipping peace operations with women protection advisers with a view to improving coordination and information-gathering to monitor and prevent sexual violence in conflicts. The role peace operations play on the ground is crucial, and we welcome the recent development of the *Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*.

In conclusion, sexual violence in conflict situations represents one of the most atrocious and terrible violations of human dignity, with implications that may hamper the building international peace and security. That is why we must step up our commitment to preventing, eradicating and ensuring accountability for such crimes, putting survivors at the centre of our actions and joining forces to address the underlying structural conditions that put women in a state of greater vulnerability and risk.



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**Annex 16****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, Mitch Fifield**

We thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for their strong leadership on this agenda and for co-organizing this important debate on moving from commitments to compliance on sexual violence in conflict. Australia welcomes the Secretary-General's renewed commitment to the eradication of conflict-related sexual violence and the analysis and recommendations contained in his recent report (S/2020/487). We align ourselves with the statement submitted by Canada on behalf of a group of Member States (see annex 20).

The women and peace and security agenda is central to the eradication of sexual violence in conflict. It recognizes that conflict has a disproportionate impact on women, but also that women are powerful mediators, peacebuilders and leaders. However, the rights of women and girls around the world continue to be compromised and sexual violence in conflict prevents women from exercising their rights to full, equal and meaningful participation in efforts to secure sustainable peace. Furthermore, we are concerned that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis is intensifying violence against women and girls, particularly in conflict and humanitarian settings — an emerging shadow pandemic that risks setbacks to the women and peace and security agenda and gender equality.

Australia is deeply concerned by the persistent and widespread occurrence of sexual violence in armed conflict. A climate of impunity discourages reporting, undermines assistance and abets further violations. Sexual violence in conflict is part of a continuum of violence. It is used as a tactic of war, particularly against women and girls, human rights defenders or individuals on the basis of perceived political affiliation, sexual orientation or ethnicity.

Gender equality is key to the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. Research clearly shows that gender inequality, including violence against women and girls, harmful norms and inequality structures, is a direct cause of sexual violence in conflict and the strongest indicator of a country's risk of conflict.

We must promote and protect women's and girls' rights. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are vital human rights and of central importance for all people in conflict situations, particularly survivors of rape and sexual violence. Access to the full range of quality reproductive and sexual-health care, services and information is critical for the recovery of survivors and for the restoration of their dignity and bodily autonomy. Respecting and upholding these rights, particularly the right to services and information, can be the difference between life and death.

We need to identify solutions and approaches that are context specific, inclusive and informed by experience, especially that of survivors. Our actions must be survivor-centred and recognize diversity in experience and need. For example, children born of rape and their mothers have particular needs, and we must not forget that male survivors, including boys, have their own barriers to accessing services.

Gender advisers are critical in peace operations, the military and police, for advancing prevention and protection, compliance and accountability, and justice for survivors. In this regard, we welcome the recent launch of the *Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*. We remain committed to preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment; it is our collective responsibility to act in ethical and transparent ways, building respectful working relationships that reject inappropriate behaviours.

Australia commends the extraordinary work of survivor-advocates, civil society organizations and human rights defenders. We call on Member States to listen to their voices and support their work. Women from diverse backgrounds must be involved in all aspects of our efforts to end sexual violence and in the design and implementation of services for survivors of sexual violence in conflict.

At a time in which COVID-19 has the potential to deepen fragility and conflict, Australia stands in solidarity with, and advocates on behalf of, victims, survivors and those working on the front lines of conflict to advance gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda, and end sexual violence in conflict. We are pleased to continue to fund UN-Women's Women, Peace and Security Global Facility and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, alongside a large number of other Member States, to leverage change.

In 2020, commemorations marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the agreement of the Beijing Platform for Action and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) provide important opportunities to highlight the intersections between these two important agendas. We call on the United Nations system and all Member States to intensify efforts to eradicate sexual violence in conflict.

**Annex 17****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Rabab Fatima**

I thank you and the German presidency for organizing this virtual high-level open debate. I also express my sincere appreciation to Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Nadia Carine Therese Fornel-Poutou, Executive President, Association des Femmes Juristes de Centrafrique, and the representative of civil society for their insightful remarks.

As evident in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/487), sexual violence in conflicts remains a growing concern. Conflict related sexual violence continues unabated, and justice and redress remain elusive. Despite numerous commitments, compliance remains unsatisfactory — in terms of prevention and enforcement alike. Today's debate, on turning commitments into compliance, taking place on the twentieth anniversary of the women and peace and security agenda, could not be more relevant and timely.

Bangladesh itself went through the painful experience of conflict-related sexual violence during its war of liberation in 1971. Over 200,000 women bore its brunt. We took measures for their rehabilitation in 1972. The perpetrators were brought to justice through a trial process, and the contribution of victims was recognized officially. We are having a repeat of that traumatic experience hosting over 1 million forcibly displaced Rohingyas in Cox's Bazaar. More than half of them are women, who suffered the worst forms of sexual violence in Myanmar.

To realize its commitment to combating conflict-related sexual violence in the context of the women and peace and security agenda, Bangladesh recently adopted a national action plan on women and peace and security. Taking into account Bangladesh's contributions to United Nations peace operations, the action plan includes specific activities to increase the number of women peacekeepers and strengthen knowledge of, and compliance with, obligations relating to conflict-related sexual violence. The action plan includes specific activities to update and localize modules and training materials on mandate aspects relating to conflict-related sexual violence. We are conducting trainings for troops and police personnel on those materials.

The women peacekeepers of Bangladesh provide life-saving services as well as psychosocial support to the victims of conflict-related sexual violence in various war-ravaged zones. To meet the growing demand for women peacekeepers, the action plan also includes specific activities aimed at increasing the recruitment of women into the armed forces and police.

The national action plan also addresses the need for capacity-building for local humanitarian actors on gender-responsive and victim-centred humanitarian actions. This has been given particular focus in the light of the Rohingya context. The humanitarian assistance programmes for the Rohingya people led by the Government of Bangladesh along with United Nations and other stakeholders take into account the specific needs of women and girls, including the victims of sexual violence. Rohingya women have also been made part of the response as agents against security threats, including violent extremism and human trafficking.

The list attached to the 2020 report of the Secretary General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487) names 54 parties who are credibly suspected to committing or being responsible for matters of rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict. Unfortunately, many of those names belong to State machineries.

It is appalling to know that over 70 per cent of listed State and non-State parties are persistent perpetrators and have appeared on the list for more than five years.

As presented in the report of the Independent International Fact-finding Mission on Myanmar, sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls was used by Tatmadaw operations as a tactic of war in Rakhine during 2016 and 2017. Even now, the increased fighting between the Myanmar armed forces and various armed groups continues to put the remaining Rohingyas in Myanmar at constant risk of conflict-related sexual violence.

The listing of Tatmadaw in the Secretary-General's report is a step in the right direction. However, unless and until perpetrators are held accountable, the risks will only exacerbate. The international community, including the Council, needs to persuade Myanmar to cooperate with the relevant United Nations entities, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Independent International Fact-finding Mission on Myanmar and other international judicial mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

In the past 20 years, we have made significant progress in developing norms relating to conflict-related sexual violence and its intricate connection with international peace and security. Decisive actions have to be taken to put those norms into practice. To ensure the implementation of Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security, we would like to suggest following actions.

The compliance framework suggested by Council resolutions, including resolution 2467 (2019), needs to be fully utilized, especially by regular monitoring at the field level and engagement by the Office of the Special Representative through United Nations country teams to adopt prevention commitments. We see merit in the recommendation of the Secretary-General to strengthen targeted measures against those who do not implement existing obligations and commit, command or condone sexual violence. Coherence between conflict-related sexual violence and targeted measures would indeed send a clear signal underlining the gravity of these violations.

In addition, there is a need for greater synergies between mandated United Nations entities and the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women towards ensuring compliance with the General recommendation No. 30 of the Committee, on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, which obliges the 189 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to report on the resolutions related to conflict-related sexual violence.

We believe the issue of sexual violence cannot be addressed sustainably if the root causes of conflict are not addressed. Discrimination, persecution and subjugation weaken vulnerable and marginalized communities and reduce their ability to prevent incidents of sexual violence at the hands of the parties in conflict.

When sexual violence continuously goes unaccounted for, it becomes persistent and often normalized. Such an environment of impunity obstructs peacebuilding and recovery efforts. Hence, accountability and justice need to be prioritized in addressing sexual violence by prioritizing the strengthening of justice mechanisms in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Stronger implementation mechanisms for the Security Council's women and peace and security agenda are needed at the national, regional and global levels. Only 44 per cent of Member States — 84 — have to date developed national action plans under resolution 1325 (2000). One practical method could be to pursue

universalizing national action plans more vigorously. National action plans could serve as an important yardstick to measure progress.

Commitments relating to conflict-related sexual violence need to be internalized by the entire United Nations system, including at the field level by Resident Coordinators and other United Nations agencies in country teams. This would address the capacity gaps in the security sector, justice system and overall political processes for increasing women's participation at all levels of peace processes.

**Annex 18****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, Ronaldo Costa Filho**

First, allow me to congratulate the German presidency of the Security Council for convening this important open debate on conflict-related sexual violence in the context of the broader women and peace and security agenda.

The fight against conflict-related sexual violence is one that should unite the international community, with the Security Council fulfilling its role as the principal organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security on behalf of Member States. For it is unacceptable that, in the twenty-first century, conflict be used as a pretext for carrying out despicable acts of sexual exploitation and violence. While the United Nations has set up a working architecture to deal with the fight against conflict-related sexual violence, it is urgent that words and commitments be translated into action on the ground.

In this regard, Brazil lends its support to the efforts of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, created in 2009 to raise awareness and coordinate the response across the United Nations system and foster a victim-centred approach to sexual violence. Brazil also welcomes initiatives aimed at advancing standard procedures in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence, such as the recently launched “Murad code”.

We must consider that, among its various impacts on international peace and security, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic creates an ever-more challenging environment for survivors of sexual violence and abuse, providing potential perpetrators with opportunities for their acts to go unpunished while making it more difficult to deter such acts.

With this in mind, Brazil warmly welcomes the adoption of resolution 2532 (2020), calling for a global cessation of hostilities and establishing a humanitarian pause to allow efforts to stop the spread of the disease to take place in conflict-stricken areas.

Nevertheless, the international community should not lower its guard when it comes to the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict and post-conflict situations. Conversely, we need to remain all the more watchful. Blue Helmets in particular have a key role to play in that regard, while trying to keep themselves safe from the spread of the disease and dutifully fulfilling the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

With regard specifically to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse, the Secretary-General’s zero-tolerance policy, to which Brazil adheres entirely, provides a starting point as well as a coherent conceptual framework to deal with this lingering scourge in the context of peacekeeping. We are proud of the overall track record of our peacekeepers in their performance over more than 70 years under the United Nations flag, especially of their strict observance of conduct and discipline protocols, including adherence to the zero-tolerance policy.

The twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which we celebrate this year, should give us pause to reflect on the accomplishments made in the two past decades and on the obstacles and shortcomings the women and peace and security agenda as stumbled upon along the way.

Fighting sexual violence is one of the cornerstones of that historic, pioneering resolution. Since its adoption, the Security Council has adopted nine other resolutions on the matter, recognizing that one of the root causes of conflict-related sexual

violence is gender inequality, which pick up where resolution 1325 (2000) left off, broadening the agenda of commitments and paving the way for a broad and coherent response by the United Nations system and Member States.

The participation of women in every aspect of international peace and security is one way to address the root causes of violence, but women peacekeepers and women mediators are also valuable actors in peacemaking, peacekeeping and sustaining peace. Studies have demonstrated that a peace agreement is about 35 per cent more likely to last at least 15 years if women mediators are involved in the negotiation process. Evidence shows that belligerents trust women to be honest brokers in peace processes, hence lending more credibility to political and diplomatic efforts that will eventually hold out longer.

Women peacekeepers are in general able to reach out to more segments of the local population than their male counterparts. Their presence on the ground can encourage the reporting of cases of sexual violence and forge stronger ties between a mission and communities. It is therefore noteworthy that, for the first time in history, roughly half of the Secretary-General's special representatives and envoys are women — a remarkable feat.

As we advocate for greater participation by women in peace and security, we must highlight the importance of meeting the targets of the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028 — an integral part of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. Brazil's national action plan on women and peace and security commits to increasing the proportion of female military and police officers in peacekeeping from their current levels — 16.5 per cent of female military observers, 14.6 per cent of staff officers, 4.5 per cent of troops, 11 per cent of formed police units and 26.8 per cent of individual police officers — towards the Strategy's targets.

Brazil is also proud of its two Blue Helmets — Commander Márcia Braga and Commander Carla Araujo — distinguished with the United Nations Military Gender Award, in 2018 and 2019, respectively, for the innovative work they carried out by promoting mixed teams in patrols of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, which helped reduce sexual violence in that country. Such recognition stands as a testament to the competence these two military officers bring to the job, as well as to Brazil's commitment to ensuring the broader participation of women in peacekeeping.

The manifold links between the inclusion of women in peace and security efforts and the fight against conflict-related sexual violence should not be overlooked, most critically as the world struggles against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brazil stands ready to advance the goals of the women and peace and security agenda as we celebrate the first two decades of resolution 1325 (2000), and to help eliminate the scourge that conflict-related sexual violence inflicts on international peace and security as well as on human dignity.



**Annex 19****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations**

[Original: English and French]

Canada is proud to have a feminist foreign policy, which places gender equality at the core of our global engagement and decision-making. There is incontrovertible evidence that gender equality is essential to achieve lasting peace and security, sustainable development and inclusive economic growth. We all have the right to equal participation, non-discrimination and protection from violence.

While many achievements have been made in the past two decades since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), this anniversary year calls upon all of our countries to reflect on where improvements must be made and how further action must be taken to deliver results on its implementation. Stopping the continued and widespread occurrence of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict is one such area. We all have a collective obligation to turn our commitments into actions.

Women and girls, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) community, and others belonging to marginalized groups continue to be targeted with sexual and gender-based violence in fragile and conflict-affected situations, the effects of which have only been exacerbated during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We are appalled by the conclusion of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders that sexual and gender-based violence, including in conflict-affected contexts, is often linked to the rise of misogynistic, sexist and homophobic speech by political leaders. Understanding the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence, and taking concrete action to address them, is crucial to achieving a survivor-centred response that provides short- and long-term support for individuals and communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of recognizing the gendered aspects of public health crises, such as increases in domestic violence and the scapegoating of LGBTQI and other minority groups. The importance of considering gender-based violence services as essential and life-saving and the responsibility of all actors involved in COVID-19-response efforts has been brought to the forefront. The pandemic has also highlighted the continued need for gender-responsive policies, and for initiatives that support victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, specifically women-led grassroots organizations, which need adequate funding. Canada has committed an additional \$3 million to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in order to ensure gender perspectives are at the forefront of peacebuilding and pandemic responses, and an additional \$2 million to the COVID-19 response of the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

Health systems are straining to respond adequately to the pandemic, while the need to protect comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to safe abortion and contraception, must remain a priority. Canada will continue to support the important work of our partners ensuring that quality sexual and reproductive health services continue to be available and accessible, and will work to protect advocacy efforts that promote rights for all, especially the most marginalized. Canada has announced \$8.9 million in new international aid to ensure women and girls around the world have access to safe abortions and reproductive health services, with an additional \$1.2 million to provide technical support and capacity-building in the humanitarian sector to support sexual and reproductive health in fragile and conflict settings.

At home in Canada, we are also working to prevent and respond to the levels of violence and discrimination faced by indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people during the pandemic. This is a stark reminder of the intersecting ways in which sexual and gender-based violence can occur, including in our own society. Canada remains committed to promoting the rights and safety of indigenous peoples in Canada and has announced new funding to meet the needs of indigenous women and children experiencing or fleeing domestic violence, with additional funds to meet the increased demands during the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada is also expanding its national action plan on women and peace and security to address this type of violence.

We must ensure that the diverse voices of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict are fully reflected in our efforts to stop its all too widespread occurrence. This requires context-sensitive and tailored responses that also address the root causes of violence and conflict. Canada recognizes the significant normative progress that has been made to address sexual violence in conflict. However, we must take the necessary measures to address gaps in implementation and ensure that progress is reflected by universal compliance, supported by the necessary enforcement mechanisms, including Security Council sanctions regimes. Canada welcomes the development of the Murad code, which will enable the international community to increase accountability for conflict-related sexual violence and support the needs, safety and rights of victims and survivors through a survivor-centred approach.

COVID-19 has taught us to adapt our efforts to new challenges. Canada remains committed to preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence and to advancing gender equality. In this twentieth anniversary year of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we cannot accept any setbacks.

**Annex 20****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations on behalf of 62 Member States and the European Union**

[Original: English and French]

I am pleased to submit this statement on behalf of the following 62 Member States, representing all five regional groups at the United Nations, as well as the European Union: Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, the Republic of Korea, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Uruguay and Zambia.

We thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for co-organizing this important debate on the theme “Conflict-related sexual violence: turning commitments into compliance”. We welcome the most recent report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487).

The group expresses its serious concern at the multifaceted impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on all victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including by limiting their ability to report incidents and to access assistance and essential services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services. The group is also concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated risks of sexual and gender-based violence, especially in conflict-affected regions of the world, and is negatively impacting, and, in some areas, rolling back and undermining, the progress that has been made on gender equality and women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights and their empowerment. The group underscores the importance of human rights-based, people-centred, gender-responsive and comprehensive responses to the pandemic to fully take into account the needs and dignity of victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

We are outraged by the ongoing, persistent and widespread perpetration of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict. Sexual violence is being used as a tactic of war and terrorism and a tool of political repression in fragile contexts, during and after conflicts. It is a flagrant and unacceptable violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Women and girls — especially those who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and from marginalized groups such as refugees and migrants, internally displaced persons, indigenous women and persons living with disabilities — are disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence. Victims and survivors are frequently an actual or perceived member of a persecuted political, ethnic, religious minority or other group. We are notably appalled by the conclusion of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders that sexual and gender-based violence, including in conflict-affected contexts, is often linked to the rise of misogynistic, sexist and various forms of hate speech by political leaders. In this context, investing efforts in addressing the structural root causes of sexual and gender-based violence, including gender inequalities, must be an absolute priority to prevent violence and ensure that the human rights of all women and girls are promoted and protected. To do this, we must view COVID-19 and the scourge of

sexual and gender-based violence not as unrelated challenges but as profoundly interconnected ones.

Ensuring justice and accountability is one of the most effective means of prevention. A climate of impunity, fear and stigma discourages reporting, undermines survivor-centred relief and assistance and encourages further violations. This also affects men and boys, who often face specific social, legal and cultural barriers to reporting violence. Perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflict must be held to account; crimes must be effectively investigated and documented in a timely manner; and legal assistance, effective protection and adequate legal frameworks and institutions for the effective prosecution of crimes of sexual violence in conflict must be maintained.

We also emphasize the need to ensure adequate training in human rights and the prevention of violence for security forces who are tasked with protecting the civilian population. We acknowledge the inclusion of sexual and gender-related crimes among the most serious crimes of international concern in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Ensuring equal, adequate and holistic access to justice for victims and survivors also requires access to financial support, which survivors in all conflict settings have identified as a priority for rebuilding their lives, and for recovering from their traumas and social stigmatization. Furthermore, we encourage the Security Council to use sanctions and other targeted measures in order to enhance compliance. The group encourages the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to pursue its efforts to strengthen the capacity of national rule-of-law-institutions. We also encourage the United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict network to continue strengthening advocacy, improving coordination and accountability, and supporting country efforts to prevent conflict-related sexual violence and respond to the needs of victims and survivors.

Accountability must be accompanied by effective and multisectoral support to survivors and their communities, whose deep traumas and social stigma can persist long after the conflict has ended. We therefore encourage all Member States to adopt a survivor-centred and human rights-based approach in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Greater efforts are needed at all levels to ensure that survivors have access to the full range of mental health, psychosocial support, livelihood, legal and non-discriminatory health services. We must stand in solidarity with survivors, not just in words but also in actions, by being outspoken in defence of their rights and agency, especially as survivors face overlapping crises. A comprehensive and holistic approach to accountability that places victims and survivors at the centre of all interventions includes principles of participation, transparency, non-discrimination, empowerment and sustainability.

In addition, we cannot let the impact of COVID-19 erode our prevention and response efforts and by extension endanger the maintenance of international peace and security. Before the pandemic, less than 1 per cent of humanitarian assistance was dedicated to sexual and gender-based violence services, and we are concerned there will be increased pressure to further reduce critical resources to this sector. We therefore call for increased funding for gender-responsive programming, including tackling gender-based violence and providing access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their respective review conferences, as well as better integration of a gender-perspective into all programming in the areas of peace and security and in humanitarian interventions.

The group wishes to underscore the importance of the participation of women and child-protection advisers in United Nations peace operations to better coordinate and improve the quality of information available on trends and patterns of conflict-related sexual violence in order to facilitate early warning and prevention. Recognizing the important role played by United Nations field missions in preventing sexual violence in conflict, the group welcomes the recent release of the *Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*.

In conclusion, as the Secretary-General has stated, the group underscores that sexual violence in conflict does not happen in a vacuum and has broader implications and links to the women and peace and security agenda. By successfully preventing and combating sexual violence in conflict, we are ensuring that women and girls can exercise their right to full, equal and meaningful participation and decision-making in all aspects of peace and security. We are therefore deeply concerned by the increased reports of attacks against women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders and by the withdrawal of many women from prominent leadership roles in peace and transitional justice processes and civic space more generally.

In this historic year marking the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is high time to act to end sexual violence in conflict.

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**Annex 21****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, Guillermo Roque Fernández De Soto Valderrama**

[Original: Spanish]

The Government of Colombia categorically rejects sexual violence in all settings, including armed conflict. Based on our belief that this problem needs to be addressed with a gender-informed approach, Colombia has adopted measures to safeguard the rights of women, girls and boys in conflict settings.

To that end, the State of Colombia has enacted national laws applied through the development and implementation of public policies, plans, programmes and projects to support victims and prevent crimes of sexual violence. Colombia's normative framework includes 15 provisions that comprehensively ensure the protection of victims, access to justice, reparations and psychosocial support and uphold their reproductive and sexual rights. Moreover, the Constitutional Court in 2008 recognized the commission of acts of sexual aggression in conflict as violations of international norms, such as the Geneva Conventions and article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In addition, the Victims' Comprehensive Support and Reparation Unit — the State entity tasked with attending to and meeting the needs of victims of the armed conflict in Colombia — recently published a document containing guidelines for psychosocial support to victims of sexual violence in armed conflict. This was the result of joint work by the International Organization for Migration and the United States Agency for International Development, organizations that share Colombia's interest in addressing this phenomenon in the most comprehensive and precautionary way.

Likewise, the Office of the Attorney-General gives serious priority to investigations involving gender-based violence, with a view to ensuring that perpetrators are duly prosecuted and victims protected. Through the Transitional Justice Steering Group and Victims' Registry, the Attorney-General places emphasis on problems affecting the rights of children and adolescents, gender-based violence and crimes committed against protected categories, with a view to providing appropriate support to victims.

For its part, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, a mechanism that administers justice to strengthen the transition towards peace, is equipped with a standing body, the Gender Commission, tasked with promoting the effective implementation of a gender-informed approach in the justice component of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition.

The efforts of the Government have not been decimated during the coronavirus disease pandemic. The Gender Technical Working Group of the National Reincorporation Council has been working since the onset of the pandemic to develop methods to address cases of sexual violence that occur during these conditions that enable appropriate action and prevention.

However, despite ongoing efforts and the progress made in this area, Colombia continues to face great challenges owing to the persistence of criminal actions by residual groups of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and other armed actors that continue to commit violations, thereby undermining the rights of women and children in various parts of the country. These armed groups and criminals are seeking to intimidate and control the community through sexual violence. The State, under the leadership of the

Presidential Counsellor's Office for Human Rights and through the Intersectoral Commission for the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of and Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents, monitors and coordinates actions to counter these types of crime in the territories.

It is important to highlight that, under the leadership of President Iván Duque Márquez, the State's public policy line for the prevention of the recruitment or use of children and adolescents and for the prevention of sexual violence against them by organized armed groups and organized criminal groups was updated and formulated. With respect to criminal conduct involving uniformed members of the public forces, it must be made clear that under no circumstances do such acts correspond to any State policy. On the contrary, President Duque Márquez has emphatically stated that the State will not tolerate any type of abuse of minors. The Government has publicly and insistently requested that progress be made in criminal investigations both in the course of ordinary justice and with respect to disciplinary investigations in the Office of the Attorney General against the perpetrators of these crimes. Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence and the military forces have shown no tolerance for such acts.

The Colombian State calls for strengthening the fight against the crime of sexual violence in all its forms and dimensions, which necessarily requires mechanisms for comprehensive reparation for the victims, as well as effective sanctions and condemnations imposed by the international community against the illegal armed groups, which are the main perpetrators of these practices.



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**Annex 22****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations**

I wish to thank the German presidency of the Security Council, working in collaboration with the Dominican Republic as joint Chairs of the Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, for convening today's important meeting. This statement complements that of the representative of the European Union (EU) (see annex 25).

Nearly 20 years after the unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) by the Security Council, protecting women from sexual violence in armed conflict remains the most undervalued aspect of the protection of civilians in conflict situations. The call stipulated in resolution 1325 (2000) on all belligerents to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence has not curtailed rape and other forms of sexual abuse as a weapon of war and humiliation. Not only do we have a long way to go in order to ensure more safety for women in situations of armed conflict, but we also have to expand the scope of protective measures from sexual violence in armed conflict to include men and boys and to account for factors, such as displacement, that might make certain civilians even more vulnerable.

The fact that sexual violence has taken place in every conflict since the dawn of history is a testament to just how deeply rooted exploitation of vulnerability is and how easily beastly instincts take the upper hand or are used as weapons. Furthermore, the sheer scale of such violence in our times and a persisting attitude of quasi-normalization of rape in armed conflict remain an insult to human civilization. They expose a profound failure of national Governments and the international community, given the prohibition of rape and other forms of sexual violence by customary international law, in both international and non-international armed conflicts, as well as the wide recognition of such acts as war crimes since the first codification of the laws of war in early military manuals and as crimes against humanity in current international legal practice.

As a State whose civilian population was subjected to rape and sexual violence during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in July and August 1974, with Turkey acting with complete impunity and zero accountability, my country is painfully aware that perpetrators often get away with crime and that victims have little chance of getting justice, are alone in their agony, stigmatized, deprived of proper access to sexual health care following abuse, and without adequate psychological support. We also know that the readiness of a conflict State to respect international law may not amount to much in the chaos that prevails during conflict. We therefore need to be conscious that the adoption of declarations and legal texts should not blur the focus on perpetrators, be they States or other actors that are taking advantage of the gaps and lawlessness created by conflict, and the increased vulnerability of women and girls.

Accordingly, in addition to the accession of States to all relevant instruments of international law and transposing their rules into robust national legislation and enforcing both, and, in addition, naturally, to sustained efforts around the world to inculcate respect for the sanctity and inviolability of women and girls and of course all non-combatants, as well as the rules of war in armed conflict, Cyprus considers the following steps as indispensable to making progress.

Increased accountability of military commanders so as to ensure that the combatants under their command are trained in and comply with international law, including criminal liability for commanders themselves for lack of compliance, is the most direct way of stemming sexual violence in armed conflict at the source.

However, the elimination of impunity is perhaps the more powerful deterrent. This entails criminal prosecution and not just accountability, for example, within the framework of a truth commission, if the armed forces and/or the national criminal justice system cannot prosecute, which is why the International Criminal Court, with its complementary jurisdiction, was created.

Both civilian and military authorities should collect evidence and interview victims and witnesses in the wake of fighting, focusing on war crimes, crimes against humanity, and missing persons. Humanitarian actors should be able to assist upon request.

Like other war crimes and crimes against humanity, sexual violence, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and enforced sterilization should not be pardoned in any amnesty that may be granted as part of a peace agreement.

Furthermore, victims and their suffering must be acknowledged. Victims must be treated as such and not as an inconvenient statistic shrouded in taboo. Victims should be entitled to reparations and remedy, even where criminal prosecution is absent, as well as the lifelong support and counselling they are likely to need. They should also be helped with reintegration if they are marginalized by society.

Lastly, we should continue to enrich the body of collective commitments we have, not only in creating additional directly relevant survivor-centred, human rights-based obligations and in enhancing accountability in complying with these obligations, but in situating such obligations within the broader framework of achieving gender parity. We need to treat the disease, not just alleviate symptoms. In this context, Cyprus' third national action plan on gender equality, covering the period from 2019 to 2023, incorporates a holistic approach to gender equality, addressing seven priority areas — violence, gender stereotypes, decision-making, social rights, legislative reform, employment and education — and draws on policy recommendations by treaty bodies and United Nations norms, as well as EU policy frameworks. Cyprus is also close to finalizing its first national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

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**Annex 23****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, Martin Bille Hermann**

I deliver this statement on behalf of Norway, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Denmark. I thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for organizing today's open debate. Furthermore, I express sincere gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten and her Office for their important work.

We have seen several results on the normative side: of the 10 Security Council resolutions adopted under the women and peace and security agenda, 7 specifically describe sexual violence as a major impediment to international peace and security. Other positive developments include the policy for United Nations field missions on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence, which was adopted in January this year, and the first whole-of-mission *Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, which was launched just over a month ago.

While much of the normative framework against sexual violence is in place, sexual violence continues to be a horrific part of conflicts around the world. We cannot turn a blind eye to this situation. It is high time to move from words to action. We must step up efforts at all levels, including in relation to both advocacy and funding for prevention and measures aimed at addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a violation of international human rights and international humanitarian law. It can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity and an act of genocide. Sexual violence destroys lives, tears apart the social fabric of communities, creates rifts between neighbours and preys on the differences that enrich our societies. Those who are targeted are often discriminated against owing to their religious, ethnic, sexual, political or other minority status.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has borne witness to a "shadow pandemic" in the form of a sharp rise in incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, including in conflict situations. To make matters worse, it is anticipated that COVID-19 will severely hamper the possibility of survivors to report sexual violence, further exacerbating the existing structural, institutional and sociocultural barriers to reporting such crimes. Adding to this, sexual- and gender-based-violence response programmes are in many cases not considered to be essential, life-saving services and prioritized as such in the context of the overall COVID-19 response.

That needs to change. We need to ensure a prompt and comprehensive response to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. We need to work towards the establishment of specific protocols for survivors to continue to be able to gain access to timely services, including the full range of sexual and reproductive health-care services, while mitigating the risks of COVID-19 transmission. And we need to put an emphasis on the development of specific mitigation plans and measures to ensure rule of law and accountability for sexual violence as part of the overall COVID-19 response. In the end, justice and accountability are not only imperative to end impunity; they are key in ensuring prevention.

The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire during the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a key step for addressing the shadow pandemic of conflict-related sexual violence. It should be the starting point for promoting a transformative and feminist approach to peace and security. We welcome the Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487) pointing to possible ways forward.

We must monitor and document violations of international law and provide training and funding where needed. Individual States have the primary responsibility of preventing and responding to sexual violence, as well as of investigating and prosecuting persons implicated in such crimes. However, we need to strengthen State institutions and build capacity to combat conflict-related sexual violence. Perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence must be held to account.

We call for the systematic use of gender expertise in United Nations operations and would like to highlight the importance of women protection advisers. We welcome the initiatives launched in the past year and echo the need for resolutions, mandates and sanctions to address conflict-related sexual violence and further translating words into action.

Eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a key part of combating sexual and gender-based violence, and it should be included in all four pillars of women and peace and security agenda: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. We need to focus more on the gendered aspects of the spread of small arms and light weapons and to include more women in disarmament efforts.

Root causes of gender-based violence, such as gender-based power inequalities, gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination must be addressed in policy and practice. Responsive measures, such as providing adequate services to survivors of gender-based violence, are crucial, as are measures to prevent the violence from happening in the first place.

We support the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, and we firmly believe that we can achieve better results by working together. The Oslo conference on ending sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises, held in May 2019, helped to change the way we address this issue. We must maintain momentum to make sexual and gender-based violence, prevention and response a key humanitarian priority. We highly value the contributions of survivors and witnesses, civil society and human rights defenders, which are crucial to building a relevant and effective response without causing survivors further pain.

Reparation and justice must go hand in hand. A comprehensive approach is a prerequisite to alleviating both the immediate and long-term impact of conflict-related sexual violence. We must strengthen services for survivors of sexual violence, including by ensuring comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as access to emergency contraception and the safe termination of pregnancies. We must fight impunity, remove stigma, alleviate suffering, rectify injustices and ultimately help people to rebuild their lives and communities to build a sustainable peace.

Accountability also means funding. The Nordic countries recognize that we as donors have a responsibility to promote flexible and core funding as well as build equal partnerships with civil society organizations. We appeal to other countries to step up and take on their responsibility to improve funding for conflict-related sexual violence interventions. The Nordic countries will do our part, through our embassies, multilateral cooperation and a wide range of partnerships, including the Nordic Women Mediators Network and the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, to equip peacekeepers. With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to spread by the minute, the time for action is now.

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**Annex 24****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations**

At the outset, we would like to thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for organizing today's high-level open debate on conflict-related sexual violence. We would also extend our thanks to the briefers for their interesting briefings delivered at the beginning of the meeting.

Egypt welcomes the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, especially her cooperation with African States. We also welcome the measures undertaken by the Secretariat with regard to the increase in number of women protection advisers in United Nations peacekeeping missions, as we believe that conflict resolution cannot be separated from efforts to empower women and girls and the elimination and prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict.

As we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the women and peace and security agenda this year, it is worth mentioning that Egypt has always supported the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and its agenda in relation to the inclusion of women at all levels of peace and security arrangements. In this regard and at the national level, Egypt is developing its first national plan to monitor and implement resolution 1325 (2000). The Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding organizes series of workshops for Egyptian forces and forces from Arab and African countries participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations to train them to deal with crimes related to sexual violence in armed conflicts.

Egypt reiterates its commitment to the Secretary-General's initiatives for zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. We will continue working with the Security Council and the Secretariat to eliminate all forms of violence against women in the peacekeeping-operations context. We commend the efforts of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, especially the efforts related to capacity-building of States in conflict or post-conflict situations.

Egypt calls for the mobilization of human and financial resources to assist in the implementation of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We believe that the situation of women under foreign occupation, especially that of Palestinian women, should not be left out of our discussions on women and peace and security.

Respect for the societal and cultural contexts in each country when implementing the women and peace and security agenda is paramount, especially when combating sexual violence. We call upon the Secretary-General to focus his reports only on sexual violence in armed conflicts zones. His reports should not include controversial concepts and concepts that are not internationally agreed.

Egypt would like to highlight the important role of building the capacities of religious and local leaders to raise awareness about ending stigma for victims of sexual violence. While thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for her work, we call on her to resume the dialogue launched with the Al-Azhar Al-Sharif institution and the League of Arab States with regard to the correction of religious discourse and the renunciation of violence against women and girls, especially in armed conflicts.

**Annex 25****Statement by the Principal Advisor on Gender and on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security of the European External Action Service of the European Union, Mara Marinaki**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for keeping this important topic on the agenda of the Security Council. We owe this to all victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. They expect us to move resolutely from commitments to compliance on sexual violence in conflict until the day when there are no longer any cases of these crimes.

This anniversary year for resolution 1325 (2000), which marks the 20 years since the Security Council recognized the relationship between the rights and safety of women and international peace and security, has been disrupted by the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Yet this will not deter us. We will adapt and continue to work resolutely for the comprehensive implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and its interrelated pillars of women's rights, agency and safety.

It is alarming that, as the Secretary-General points out in his latest report on Sexual Violence in Conflict, "the level of compliance by all parties to conflict with the resolutions of the Security Council remains low after a decade of concerted focus" (*S/2020/487, para. 74*). The EU and its member States are determined to show political leadership and make all efforts to fill these gaps in compliance.

While the Secretary-General's report was finalized before the COVID-19 outbreak, the pandemic has provided fresh evidence that such crises exacerbate and amplify structural gender inequalities. Recent data have confirmed an increased level of gender-based violence in general, including a rise in domestic violence under quarantine. We must therefore put the safety of women and girls first in our response to COVID-19.

As EU High Representative Josep Borrell and the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten stressed in their joint statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, we must now move from words to action in order to prevent that such violence occurs. We need to protect victims, hold perpetrators to account and guarantee access to justice, reparations and redress for survivors. In line with the survivor-centred approach defined by resolution 2467 (2019) and previously adopted resolutions, we will put the needs of victims and survivors at the front and centre of our actions.

In this respect, we recognize the important work done by civil society actors, human rights defenders and peacebuilders, who are often putting their lives at risk to fight injustice. We express our gratitude to these champions, most often women, whose work and advocacy have been an essential part of everything that has been achieved to date.



Gender matters in humanitarian settings because women, girls, boys and men are affected by crises and conflicts in different ways. They have different needs, suffer from different vulnerabilities and face particular risks, but do not necessarily have access to the same resources and services. Furthermore, they develop diverse coping or survival mechanisms and possess specific capacities to support their families and communities during and after disasters and conflict. Responses must take into account the root causes of gender-based violence and must follow an intersectional approach, taking into account the specific challenges of those suffering from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. This includes also recognizing the agency of women and girls in shaping the response.

The past months have shown the importance of investing massively in the health sector to ensure immediate support to victims and survivors. Comprehensive health services, which include access to sexual- and reproductive-health, mental-health and psychological support for victims, are a fundamental part of a survivor-centred approach. The EU remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of Beijing Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences and, in this context, remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The EU has taken concrete actions to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence based on a holistic approach. Through the EU-United Nations Spotlight Initiative, many projects have been launched to scale up existing hotlines, provide shelters and reinforce the capacity of the health, justice and other sectors. With funding of €500 million, Spotlight is the largest global investment in eliminating violence against women and girls.

While humanitarian emergencies affect entire communities, the consequences are most severely felt by women and girls. We are concerned that sexual and gender-based violence remains among the most underfunded humanitarian appeals. In 2019, the EU allocated approximately €26 million of its humanitarian aid budget to preventing and responding to gender-based violence worldwide, and an additional €20 million was allocated for reproductive health. We call on all States Members of the United Nations to step up support for gender-responsive programming.

Awareness-raising is essential to transforming gender stereotypes and social norms and to preventing sexual violence. An example of which we are proud of is the European Union Training Mission in Mali, where Malian soldiers and officers receive mandatory sexual and gender-based violence and international humanitarian law training as part of their regular training curriculum. Incentives must be accompanied by decisive measures to deter and prevent sexual violence.

The EU regrets that the level of compliance by conflicting parties with current Security Council resolutions remains very limited. This is unacceptable. We call on the Security Council to use sanctions and other targeted measures to enhance compliance. Inclusion of sexual violence as stand-alone designation criterion in existing sanctions regimes has proven an effective tool for both prevention and accountability.

Today, 17 July, is the Day of International Criminal Justice. Justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence and crimes are still too often the exception. At a time when the rules-based international order is facing increased pressure, it is more important than ever to strengthen the international criminal justice system and bring an end to impunity for sexual violence and the vicious cycle impunity engenders. The EU and its member States reaffirm their full support for the International Criminal Court (ICC) and invite all



States that have not yet done so to consider joining the ICC to end impunity for the most serious crimes, including conflict-related sexual crimes.

In Colombia, Kosovo and the Philippines, the EU has supported programmes prioritizing help for victims and increasing the effectiveness of transitional justice processes aimed at building a more just and stable society. In Colombia, we are supporting the work of Colombian human rights defenders.

Justice must be accompanied by reparations to allow survivors to rebuild their lives and recover from their traumas. The EU was one of the first contributors to the Global Survivors Fund launched by Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege last year, with an envelope of €2 million. We have also mobilized €15 million for direct and flexible support to women's and grassroots organizations in sub-Saharan Africa, through the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, and in Haiti, Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea, through the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

Finally, the Secretary-General's recent report makes it clear that there is still a long way to go before sexual violence is effectively stamped out across the world. Sadly, despite all our achievements, cases of sexual violence remain all too numerous. Let us change that. Let us do more and better, together. With that in mind, the EU is co-leading the Action Coalition focusing on ending gender-based violence under the Generation Equality Forum, which offers a good opportunity to renew and combine our efforts to end sexual violence in peace as well as in conflict.

**Annex 26****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations, Kaha Innadze**

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Germany and the Dominican Republic for convening today's open debate.

Georgia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (see annex 25). Let me make a few remarks in my national capacity.

Conflict-related sexual violence constitutes a grave human rights violation and serious threat to international peace and security. The adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) 20 years ago was an important milestone in this regard. Resolution 1820 (2008), which recognized conflict-related sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security, and resolution 1888 (2009), which established the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, served as major breakthroughs in the fight against this heinous crime. In addition, by adopting resolution 2467 (2019) last year, spearheaded by Germany, the international community took a significant step forward in strengthening justice and embracing a survivor-centred approach.

Yet despite the significant advancements in the normative domain, implementation is lagging. According to the findings of the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/487), sexual violence continues to be used as a cruel tactic of war to dehumanize, instil fear, forcibly displace people and impede prospects of sustaining peace and reconciliation. The coronavirus disease has further compounded challenges faced by the survivors of the sexual violence.

Ensuring accountability for perpetrators and justice for survivors is key to prevention and deterrence of future violence of this nature. Embracing a survivor-centred approach should become another pivotal aspect in our response to conflict-related sexual violence, including through ensuring better access for victims to justice, and medical services.

Finally, without addressing such structural root causes of sexual violence as gender inequality, it is impossible to build a society where human rights are universally respected. Committed to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of Georgia pays heightened attention to the implementation of the Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security. Through our national action plans, we have been promoting gender equality in all aspects of public life, including by integrating gender perspectives in the security sector and decision-making processes, increasing participation of women in the Geneva International Discussions and in the mechanisms for preventing and responding to incidents of sexual violence.

Another key aspect is promoting gender equality in the military. The Georgian Ministry of Defence's gender-equality strategy establishes the conditions required to guarantee equal rights, freedoms and opportunities for men and women, prevent and eradicate all forms of discrimination, counter any kind of gender violence and eliminate the misconduct, sexual harassment and physical and psychological mistreatment. The Ministry of Defence has further improved its legislative base to ensure accountability for sexual harassment by military service personnel. In 2018, for the first time, the notion of sexual harassment and sanctions for perpetrators thereof have been introduced in the defence system. Since 2014, training on gender perspectives has constituted an integral part of predeployment preparation of peacekeepers, with 6,000 military service personnel, both men and women, having

been trained up to now. Gender and domestic violence issues are also subject to post-traumatic-stress-disorder sessions at the post-deployment stage.

Fighting sexual violence requires placing the needs and priorities of victims of sexual violence at the heart of our response strategy. Accordingly, the State Care Agency, operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, provides protection, assistance and rehabilitation of the victims of human rights violations, including domestic violence, violence against women and sexual abuse.

At the international level, Georgia, together with Canada, Sweden, Uruguay and Fiji, has been active in the United Nations Human Rights Council in leading a new initiative: a resolution on accountability for ensuring women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights in humanitarian settings, which is planned to be presented to the Council in the near future.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned efforts, my Government continues to be unable to extend protection to conflict-affected women residing in the occupied regions of Georgia, namely, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. The protracted illegal occupation of these two regions by the Russian Federation continues to deprive local residents of some of their basic human rights, with restrictions on freedom of movement, deprivation of property rights and prohibition of education in their native language.

Finally, let me reiterate our unwavering commitment to contributing to the promotion of the women and peace and security agenda and to the global endeavour to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence.

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**Annex 27****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations**

Greece would like to congratulate the German presidency of the Security Council as well as the Dominican Republic on organizing today's open debate on conflict-related sexual violence. Greece would also like to thank the distinguished speakers for their comprehensive briefings.

While aligning itself with the statement submitted by the European Union (annex 25), Greece would like to further highlight the devastating impact of conflict-related sexual violence, which is very often used as a tactic of war and terrorism, on international peace and security, as has been duly illustrated in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/487). In this context, the prevailing culture of perpetrator impunity, together with the false perception of conflict-related sexual violence constituting a collateral damage of war, often negates the recognition of those subjected thereto as war victims, condemning them to invisibility, silence and further victimization.

Resolution 2467 (2019) introduces a survivor-centred approach to conflict-related sexual violence, which serves as a very useful tool in assessing and addressing the specific rights, individual needs and differentiated harms suffered by those sexually violated in conflict and post-conflict settings, mostly women and girls, on the basis of intersecting inequalities. This approach allows for people-centred, holistic, gender and child-sensitive responses, thereby transforming the victims of conflict-related sexual violence into empowered survivors.

Accordingly, the survivor-centred approach is fully compatible with the notion of human security, which recognizes the right of every human being to live free from fear generated by armed conflict and conflict-related sexual violence; from want caused by hunger, malnutrition, diseases and underdevelopment; and in dignity, with full respect of his or her human rights, within gender-equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law. The multidimensional character of the human security approach is particularly relevant to the current global health crisis caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, which has exacerbated structural inequalities and placed a disproportionate burden on the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, especially women and girls, and has therefore had a negative cumulative effect on their personal, health, food, economic and political security.

The women and peace and security agenda, which incorporates a survivor-centred approach to conflict-related sexual violence, provides a comprehensive policy framework and the impetus for empowering and giving voice to survivors, first, by focusing on prevention and measures that address and tackle the root causes of gender inequality, conflict and conflict-related sexual violence, as well as on gender-responsive reforms, awareness-raising and peace education initiatives guaranteeing non-recurrence in most cases; secondly, by prioritizing the protection of the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, their non-discriminatory access to justice and redress, along with the accountability and punishment of perpetrators so that peace may be restored; thirdly, by placing a particular emphasis on the relief and recovery of survivors through their unhindered access to a wide range of high-quality multisectoral services that include, inter alia, medical care, sexual and reproductive health as well as psychological support; and finally, yet importantly, by advocating meaningful gender-equal representation, participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels, which is a prerequisite for gender-sensitive policies.

Turning those commitments into compliance requires multi-stakeholder cooperation involving, inter alia, international organizations, States Members of the United Nations, academia, civil society, human rights defenders and women's and

grass-roots organizations. It also requires effective, coherent, tailor-made and results-oriented policies at all levels, which are based on thorough gender analysis, gender mainstreaming, knowledge- and experience-sharing, as well as on sound division of labour among stakeholders. However, it requires most of all a zero-tolerance attitude towards conflict-related sexual violence along with a mind shift in understanding that the ultimate goal is not a “war without rape” but rather “a world without war”, as the most recent report of the Secretary-General points out (*S/2020/487, para. 16*).

Greece attaches great importance to eradicating conflict-related sexual violence. Having ratified the fundamental conventional documents of international humanitarian and human rights law, Greece is in the process of developing national action plans on women and peace and security and on the rights of the child, respectively, which set as a priority not only the protection of women and girls from conflict-related violations and abuses, but also their empowerment. In the light of this, Greece remains committed to joining forces with all international stakeholders in a common effort to adequately promote and protect the rights and welfare of conflict-affected women and girls.

In conclusion, the women and peace and security agenda suggests that when women and girls feel secure and therefore free to develop their full potential as powerful agents of change, peace is secured. Further, this can only be achieved by giving voice, strength and resilience to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence so that no one is left behind.

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**Annex 28****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations**

Guatemala would like to express its appreciation to the German presidency of the Security Council for convening today's open high-level video-teleconference of the Security Council on conflict-related sexual violence, and to the Dominican Republic, which, with Germany, jointly chairs the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security. We also appreciate the briefers' briefings.

We are confident that today's discussion is timely because of the added burden caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic. We trust that it will help to identify joint solutions that address effectively the challenges remaining in efforts to protect women and girls and achieve gender equality and peace.

Guatemala attaches great importance to this topic. Sexual violence against women during armed conflict has historically been used as an atrocious tactic of war to establish terror. It is a flagrant violation of human rights. It is appalling and unjustifiable that sexual violence is still used to generate income through trafficking and sexual slavery, particularly as compensation for combatants in extremist groups. We strongly condemn all these acts and call for the redoubling of efforts to achieve the full eradication of conflict-related sexual violence.

We must highlight the important role that women play in peacebuilding. There is a relevant link between the full and meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and the efforts aimed at adequate reconciliation, reinsertion and reconstruction in ensuring effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Women must participate on an equal footing in all activities to maintain and promote human rights, development and peace and security. We must increase the representation of women in all local, national, regional and international decision-making processes for conflict prevention and resolution. Gender-related issues need to be considered in all deliberations of the Security Council to achieve sustainable peace.

Cognizant of the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) and mindful of the need to ensure a gender perspective in field missions, Guatemala proudly contributes through the deployment of female staff in areas of armed conflict. In this regard, we stress that the zero-tolerance policy is of high importance for the prevention of violations related to sexual abuse and exploitation.

We join the international community in commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). Furthermore, Guatemala also commemorates the third anniversary of the adoption of its national action plan, which has helped to strengthen its framework on gender issues through a national mechanism whereby 14 Governmental institutions oversee the adequate protection of the rights of women and girls and discuss the challenges that the country continues to face for the protection and promotion of gender equality. We appreciate the assistance provided by UN-Women and the contributions of civil society to fulfil our national action plan.

To date, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court constitutes the most progressive international legal framework on gender crimes. As a State party to the Rome Statute, we highlight that the Statute's provisions should be incorporated into the national context through a comprehensive framework for the international investigation of crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, specific procedures to support victims and witnesses, programmes aimed at raising women's awareness of laws that concern them, allocation of adequate resources to monitor the application of laws that take into account the gender perspective and provisions to compensate

victims. Each of these components has great importance for women's access to justice, and it is the responsibility of each State to implement them.

In closing, Guatemala firmly believes that women are agents of change and have an important role to play as facilitators of dialogue and reconciliation in their societies. Through the continued and holistic discussion of this agenda item in the Security Council, we can further contribute to the interdependence of the pillars of peace and security, development and human rights.



**Annex 29****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations, Katalin Annamária Bogyay**

I wish to thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for convening today's important meeting and for making it as open and inclusive as possible under the current circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I also thank the Secretary-General for his thoughtful remarks and for his reports on women and peace and security, including his most recent report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487), as well as the briefers for sharing their perspectives and bringing the voices of women to us from across the globe.

Hungary aligns itself with the statement submitted by the representative of the European Union (annex 25) and with the message conveyed on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (annex 20). We wish to add some remarks in our national capacity.

This year, as we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the resolution 1325 (2000), Hungary reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We strongly believe that sexual violence in conflict is an impediment to international peace and security, a serious violation of human rights and an attack on women's empowerment. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have an even greater responsibility than ever to take all measures to prevent these crimes, support survivors, ensure accountability for perpetrators and put an end to the shame and stigma related to sexual violence.

We are appalled by the ongoing systematic and widespread conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence that is often used as a tactic of war and terrorism and can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity and even genocide. Accountability and justice have been painfully lagging behind and must be provided accordingly, irrespective of the affiliation of the perpetrator. We also call for the international community to better uphold the rights and address the needs of women and girls belonging to religious and ethnic minorities persecuted and displaced by conflict or terrorism.

Tragically, the pandemic has not swept away existing challenges, conflicts and inequalities; on the contrary, it has amplified and exacerbated them. Now more than ever, we need to invest in, involve and ignite action for girls and women in order to accelerate progress on the women and peace and security agenda. Survivors of conflict-related sexual violence require not only immediate medical care, but also shelter, comprehensive psychosocial support, legal services and long-term assistance, including legal and socioeconomic support to survivors and their children. All actions should be human rights-based and gender-responsive.

In order to successfully implement the women and peace and security agenda, action needs to be taken already in peacetime, on the one hand, by addressing the root causes of conflicts and preventing militarization and arms proliferation, and, on the other hand, protecting and promoting the human rights of all women and girls and eliminating all forms of violence and harmful practices against them. A long-term victory over this scourge is not possible without ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment, including through equal recognition before the law, access to economic and financial resources and full participation of women in all aspects of life.

More than ever, we see the power of girls and women shining through the insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide. More than ever, all around the globe, we see women stepping up, using creative means and new technologies to

gather and disseminate information, inspire and guide action and create a narrative of common responsibility. More than ever, women are leading on interconnectedness, flexibility and readiness to take action.

We need to involve women in decision-making processes and give them a leadership role, including in institutionalized mechanisms. Participation is all the more important when a nation is fighting for its future and for peace. Revolutions and ceasefires can be washed away; only inclusive peace can be sustainable. Women need to participate meaningfully and inclusively in mediation, peace processes and wider decision-making structures and in implementing ceasefires and peace agreements. Through its resolutions, the Security Council should give a clear mandate to ensuring the inclusion of women.

Women do have a voice; we just need to give them the space and attention they need to raise it. We must support women-led and women-focused organizations by building capacity and agency and by ensuring safe and ample civic space, including for women peacebuilders and human rights defenders, who are often at the forefront of peace efforts.

What this health crisis teaches us is that it is not always possible to predict breakdowns, or even prevent them. Success therefore lies in building robustness and resilience against them. More than ever, it is time to join together and take action to protect women and put an end to conflict-related sexual violence, achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and foster their participation in all aspects of life. Overall, there is a pressing need for change in the culture of impunity and mentality and for a strong political will to achieve it. The world is looking to the Security Council to lead on these matters.

**Annex 30****Statement by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations**

We thank Germany for convening this open debate. We also thank all the briefers for sharing their experiences and insights today. Once again, they have reminded us of the poignant human tragedy that lies at the heart of this agenda and of the solemn duty of the international community to end impunity and assist the survivors and their communities to heal from trauma, in order to ensure peace.

Sexual violence in armed conflicts, perpetrated by State and non-State actors, poses grave security challenges. It divides communities and weakens governance. It imperils the opportunities for post-conflict reconciliation and stability. The Security Council's actions in response to sexual violence in conflicts and post-conflict situations must therefore be fully informed of the dynamic complexities of the conflicts and the facts on the ground.

We wish to highlight the following points on the theme of today's discussion.

First, we wish to mention that the issue of violence against women, including sexual violence, has been discussed by other United Nations bodies, including the Human Rights Council. Deliberations at the Security Council should therefore remain focused on those atrocities perpetrated in situations of armed conflicts that threaten intentional peace and security.

Secondly, in order to take action to address the implementation gaps, the Council needs to be better informed of the drivers and motivations of a range of State and non-State actors. Justice systems and rule-of-law mechanisms at all levels must be strengthened in order to hold accountable the perpetrators of sexual violence and those who order or condone such violence. Otherwise, we will be treating the symptoms without ever curing the ailment.

Thirdly, the Council's sanctions and targeted measures need to be strengthened in order to maximally advance women's protection from sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Their effective implementation by all actors must be ensured and there should be credible and effective deterrence for those who violate their obligations under sanctions regimes.

Fourthly, evidence and insights on the patterns and prevalence of sexual violence in conflict areas must inform the development of specific programmes and policies to prevent such violence and assist the survivors. Expanded programmes in strengthening rule-of-law mechanisms and security sectors in affected countries, more women in security forces and capacity-building for the protection of civilians are important. Equally important is promoting access to justice for the survivors. National ownership and meaningful community participation are key to successful prevention and response efforts.

Fifthly, it is critical to challenge the underlying social norms that prescribe behaviours leading to the normalization of sexual violence and perpetuate the stigmatization of victims. Normative, institutional and operational frameworks outside the Security Council have an important role to play in addressing such structural issues. The Council's actions need not duplicate those efforts, but must be situated within those broader frameworks.

Sixthly, the meaningful participation of women in conflict resolution, post-conflict reconciliation processes and relevant rule-of-law mechanisms needs to be promoted. India is committed to the effective implementation of the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy as a road map to increase the number of women peacekeepers. We believe that all women units need to be incentivized to ensure

greater participation of women in United Nations peacekeeping. We also remain committed to fostering cooperation with regard to providing adequate training to United Nations peacekeepers on gender issues in order to enable them to fulfil their mandates.

India's sensitivities on the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict is guided by the appalling atrocities perpetrated against women with impunity by the armed forces of Pakistan against its own people in India's immediate neighbourhood in 1971. It is ironic that those who perpetrated those crimes, including sexual violence, are now masquerading as champions of justice and levelling false allegations against India. The double standards in Pakistan's actions are self-evident.

It is common knowledge that Pakistan is breeding a cesspool of terrorists and other non-State actors, including traffickers and drug and arms peddlers, to destabilize countries in its neighbourhood and beyond. Pakistan is using abduction, forced marriages and forced religious conversions of vulnerable women and girls as weapons of persecution against religious and ethnic minority communities in their own country. The international community can no longer afford to merely sit and watch those atrocities without taking action to stop Pakistan on that reckless path.

If the Council resolutions under the agenda of sexual violence in conflict are to be translated into results, we must do much more to hold to account not just those who commit such acts but also those who command, bankroll and condone them. We need greater political will and public awareness among the affected communities and, above all, greater ownership from a range of actors to counter and prevent sexual violence from exacerbating armed conflict and hindering peace.

United Nations entities have made significant progress in monitoring, reporting and listing the persistent offenders. We need to close the compliance gaps through a range of context-specific and inclusive actions to strengthen protection and prevention. India is committed to working with all members of the Council during its forthcoming non-permanent membership to address normative and implementation challenges on this agenda.

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**Annex 31****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations**

Allow me to congratulate the presidency of the Republic of Germany on convening this meeting. I am confident in the wisdom and able leadership of Germany to lead the Security Council. I would also like to thank the briefers for their valuable insights.

This year we mark the twentieth anniversary of the Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which mobilized global efforts to eliminate the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence, a horrific weapon of war that is a threat to international peace and security.

Iraq is developing its second national plan with the assistance of the United Nations and civil society organizations. That plan focuses on new and old challenges that were not fully addressed due to various circumstances. Iraqi women have shown great resilience in their fields of work and are playing an active role in mediation efforts and in the country's response to the coronavirus disease.

Although Iraq is still committed to further implementing the joint communiqué by the Republic of Iraq and the United Nations on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence, in partnership with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the United Nations system, we regret that the Office of the Special Representative did not achieve its targets, as stipulated in the joint communiqué, because the implementation process has been obstructed for over a year.

Iraq seeks further engagement from the Office of the Special Representative in order to build the capacity of the respective authorities so as to ensure the provision of services, support livelihoods and secure reparations for survivors, thus helping survivors and guaranteeing them psychosocial support and access to rehabilitation programmes.

The Iraqi presidency submitted a draft bill on Yazidi female survivors in April 2019. That draft was later expanded to include all survivors of acts of sexual violence perpetrated by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorists. The draft bill calls for holding the perpetrators of such acts accountable in accordance with the applicable national law. The text proposes various reparation measures for survivors of captivity, acknowledges the issue of children born of sexual violence and calls for it to be addressed.

Those survivors are considered victims, which is reflected in the title of the draft law. Community and religious leaders are raising awareness of survivors' plight and are promoting tolerance and inclusion so that the victims are not blamed and are not considered or treated in any way as being affiliated with ISIL.

Lastly, in March, when sufficient evidence was provided, Iraq held accountable an ISIL terrorist who committed sexual violence against a Yazidi female survivor who was only 14 years old at the time. The perpetrator was found guilty before the court of participating in the rape and abduction of a Yazidi girl. Iraq believes that such a move will encourage other women and girls raped or abducted by ISIL to come forward and seek justice, as the reluctance of victims to testify in public had previously prevented the judicial system from bringing this kind of case. It will also empower women and girls who are survivors of sexual violence and protect their rights.

**Annex 32****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations**

I would like to thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for organizing this debate, and Minister Maas for presiding over today's discussion.

Ireland aligns itself with the statements submitted on behalf of the European Union (see annex 25) and the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security (see annex 20).

We are grateful to all briefers for their powerful interventions. I welcome in particular the interventions of Ms. Ohmar, from NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, and Ms. Fornel-Poutou, from Association des Femmes Juristes de Centrafrique. Ireland believes that the inclusion of civil society in the Security Council's discussions is critical. Hearing directly from organizations representing those affected by sexual violence in conflict enhances our understanding and our ability to make meaningful change. We must do everything we can to increase our support to local organizations, civil society and women human rights defenders, who are at the forefront of these struggles. The coronavirus disease pandemic has increased the challenge and the importance of their work. Yet as their role has become more critical, we have seen an increased targeting of women human rights defenders.

Ireland is committed to building peace that is inclusive of civil society, youth and women — from the beginning and throughout. Preventing gender-based harm is critically linked to preventing armed violence. Put simply, more equal and inclusive societies enable more peaceful societies. Strengthening gender equality and women's rights is both a human rights obligation and key to cultivating peace.

Structural gender inequalities and discrimination are at the heart of the differential impact conflict has on women, men, boys and girls and members of sexual and gender minorities. To prevent and eliminate the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, our most fundamental task is to achieve gender equality at every level. That includes ensuring women's full and effective participation in political, economic and social life. It also includes ensuring accessible and responsive political, justice and security institutions. Societies where discrimination is tolerated and where economic and social inequalities persist are an enabling environment for conflict-related sexual violence.

Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is central to Ireland's foreign policy. Our commitment is embedded in our development policy, our women and peace and security national action plan and throughout our activities at the United Nations, including our time as Chair of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. We are concerned that humanitarian services for survivors remain chronically underfunded. We strongly support and are committed to a holistic and survivor-centred approach to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. That must include access to comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health services.

In 2019, we increased our funding to partners supporting prevention and response interventions for sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Our support includes funding for the Special Appeal on the Response to Sexual Violence of the International Committee of the Red Cross and a multi-year partnership with the International Rescue Committee to support the provision of gender-based violence prevention and response services in conflict-affected and fragile contexts in sub-Saharan Africa.

Poverty, forced displacement and vulnerability increase the risk of sexual violence, especially for those in flight. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's

latest report (S/2020/487), marginalized communities, such as refugees and migrants, indigenous women, members of sexual and gender minorities, members of persecuted political, ethnic or religious minorities and persons living with disabilities, are all at particular risk. We must ensure that those groups are included in all our actions to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence and to provide redress when it does occur.

Ireland commends the critical advances made by the Office of the Special Representative towards our collective goal of ending conflict-related sexual violence and impunity for those crimes. Shining a light on those acts is vital but, as the Secretary-General's report implores, we must ensure that, once uncovered, those crimes are stopped and survivors are supported throughout their recovery. Accountability is key to protection and prevention, and the onus is on us all to do more by supporting existing international institutions and strengthening national mechanisms. Last year, Ireland was proud to provide initial support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence as part of the ongoing truth, reconciliation and reparations process in the Gambia, thus enabling survivors to participate fully in the process and strengthen national systems to respond to victims. Ireland continues to provide support to mechanisms such as Justice Rapid Response, which provide gender expertise to investigations of serious human rights violations in conflict zones, including conflict-related sexual violence.

We welcome recent progress linking conflict-related sexual violence with the work of specific sanctions committees. We strongly support efforts to bolster the use of conflict-related sexual violence as a criterion for imposing sanctions and for greater alignment across thematic and country-specific United Nations sanctions regimes. However, for such criteria to be effective in ensuring compliance and accountability, they must be clearly articulated, consistent and credible. It is not enough to simply establish a relevant mandate or introduce new designation criteria; such criteria must result in actual listings.

More can be done to ensure greater gender and humanitarian expertise on panels of experts and to encourage such panels to report consistently on instances of conflict-related sexual violence. Regular reporting from field missions would also be welcome, particularly from those missions that already have sanctions-monitoring mandates.

There can be no impunity for perpetrators, irrespective of the community or organization they come from. Ireland, as part of the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, and as a signatory to the voluntary compact on ending sexual exploitation and abuse, is committed to supporting the Secretary-General's efforts to end the abusive practices of peacekeepers.

In conclusion, we must recognize the need to tackle gender inequality as the root cause and a driver of sexual violence in times of war and peace. Ireland views tackling conflict-related sexual violence as an essential element of the wider women and peace and security agenda, which is marking its twentieth anniversary this year. Progress cannot be attained in one area without focusing on the other. During our tenure as an elected member of the Council from 2021 to 2022, we will champion implementation and progress. The survivors of these heinous crimes deserve nothing less.



**Annex 33****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations**

Italy aligns itself with the statement submitted by the European Union (see annex 25) and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

We thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for organizing this open debate, which keeps the topic of sexual violence in conflict high on the Security Council's agenda 11 years after the establishment of the mandate of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

One year ago, upon the initiative of the German presidency, the Security Council adopted resolution 2467 (2019), putting a strong focus on the victims and survivors of sexual violence and calling upon Member States to address their needs as a priority action. That is all the more urgent as the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2020/487) once again depicts a gloomy situation, with sexual crimes still being used as part of a global war strategy by State and non-State actors, thus showing the importance of our collective engagement.

The issue under discussion today represents a top priority for Italy. In 2017, it was at the core of our mandate in the Security Council and of our presidency of the Group of Seven. It continues to be high on our agenda as we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We recommit to those principles.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak and the measures taken to combat the pandemic are exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and leading to a rise in sexual and gender-based violence. The restrictions imposed due to the pandemic are also limiting access to education, legal protection services and health services, including for sexual and reproductive health. Those negative effects are especially felt by women and girls living in conflict-affected areas, which face multiple risks and barriers. This is why the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls must be placed at the heart of all our efforts to combat the virus and of all recovery measures.

In that spirit, together with 145 States Members of the United Nations, Italy supported the Secretary-General's appeal to end gender violence during the pandemic.

Tackling the root causes of violence is key, as the prevention of systematic sexual violence begins in times of peace, when national laws should be sufficiently robust to prevent abusive behaviours in times of war. We need a paradigm shift through the dismantlement of patriarchal rules that are at the basis of violence. We must also affirm a culture of full gender equality and women's empowerment by ensuring the complete and effective participation of women and girls in decision-making processes.

Our action should seek to ban all forms of gender-based violence, including harmful practices that tend to be more widespread in times of war, in particular child, early and forced marriage. Training remains an essential component of our efforts and should include a wide range of actors — youth, leaders, military and police units and civilian personnel. Establishing a stronger women's presence in United Nations missions should also be a priority so as to facilitate dialogue with local populations and encourage victims to speak out, thus enhancing missions' ability to deliver on their mandates, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians.

At the same time, it is fundamental to assist countries in situations of conflict in reforming their judicial systems and strengthening their rule-of-law and accountability mechanisms. Sexual violence in conflict constitutes a grave breach

of international humanitarian law and human rights. Fighting against impunity and holding the perpetrators accountable should be a matter of primary concern in order to deter further violations and to allow survivors' access to justice. A survivor-centred approach also means providing them with all the necessary services they need to cope with the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence, including medical services, legal assistance and psychological support.

To that end, Italy financially supports the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which is committed to fighting impunity for sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict contexts. The Team's role in providing technical assistance to Governments by strengthening their capacity to address accountability for sexual violence has proved to be critical, as it has led to more criminal investigations and prosecutions. It has also led to strengthening legal frameworks in affected countries, carrying out notable work in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Conakry and South Sudan, as recognized in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2020/487). We therefore call on all Member States to use and support this important tool.

In order to enhance the commitment of State actors to ending the hateful practice of conflict-related sexual violence, we deem it important to include it as an automatic and independent designation criterion in all relevant sanction regimes.

We also consider that the work of the Security Council would benefit from more systematic involvement by the International Criminal Court (ICC), in which the Office of the ICC Prosecutor could receive the necessary resources to conduct swift investigations. In our effort to combat all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, we also continue to promote the widest possible implementation of the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, known as the Istanbul Convention.

The United Nations should lead by example in the fight against sexual violence and set a standard of good behaviour in that regard. For that reason, Italy welcomed the invitation to be part of the Circle of Leadership launched by the Secretary-General in 2017, and is the main contributor to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

We are also a proud partner of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies, aimed at including gender-based violence prevention services from the earliest stages of intervention in humanitarian emergencies.

Finally, we commend civil society, especially women human rights defenders, for their role in raising awareness on sexual violence in conflict, often putting their lives at risk to fight injustice. Their work and advocacy are essential.

We are aware that the problem is far from being solved, and that more efforts are required of us all in order to move from commitments to compliance through a whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach and to advance the agenda. Italy is ready to engage by supporting the work of the Secretary-General and that of his Special Representative in order to pursue better and increasingly concrete results.

**Annex 34****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, Ishikane Kimihiro**

I would like to begin by thanking Germany and the Dominican Republic for convening this important high-level open debate on conflict-related sexual violence. I also wish to extend my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on this issue (S/2020/487).

We will not tolerate any sexual violence in conflict. With that firm belief, Japan has been working closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and in partnership with other relevant organizations.

First, since 2014, Japan has been providing financial assistance to the work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Somalia and Iraq, which is mandated to support the investigation, prosecution, legislative reform and capacity-building of judicial and security authorities, in close cooperation with respective Governments, as well as United Nations missions and country teams. Their work in the Central African Republic, for example, resulted in the bringing of 22 cases of conflict-related sexual violence to the criminal court in Bangui in December. Japan will continue to support the Team of Experts to ensure accountability for perpetrators and to bring justice to survivors, both of which are key to preventing and deterring future crimes.

Secondly, Japan is committed to addressing the needs of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and empowering them, which is indispensable to ensuring a people-centred response. In that regard, Japan has provided assistance to United Nations action projects, such as one in Iraq to help children born of rape and their mothers, and another in Somalia that provides mental health and psychosocial services to women victims.

Thirdly, Japan contributed €2 million this year to the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. As a Fund board member, Japan will continue to be actively engaged in its effective management.

Lastly, Japan contributed \$4.5 million to UN-Women to support its coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic response through four regional projects, which include activities to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

In the midst of this unprecedented human security crisis caused by COVID-19, we must work together to minimize its impact and build back a more resilient and inclusive society where all individuals, in particular the most vulnerable people and those most affected by conflict, are able to live in dignity and are duly protected and empowered. In this landmark year for women's agendas, Japan reaffirms its unwavering commitment to redouble its efforts to end sexual violence in conflict. We look forward to working closely with the United Nations in that joint endeavour.

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**Annex 35****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Jordan to the United Nations**

Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on a successful presidency of the Security Council, and to thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for convening this meeting today during these challenging times. I would also like to thank the briefers for their insight and views.

Jordan also aligns itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security (see annex 20), chaired by Canada.

This year marks the milestone seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, which we celebrate in unusual circumstances, with a pandemic that has disrupted our daily lives, halted the growth of our economies and further intensified the suffering of many — mainly women and girls in conflict zones.

Despite efforts to end sexual violence in conflict, including by implementing resolution 2106 (2013), it continues to be a common feature of armed conflicts around the globe. Sexual violence can constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. Such atrocities demand accountability under international law, and we must effectively utilize every tool available to prevent these grave violations and protect the victims, regardless of gender, in times of peace and war. In that regard, Jordan welcomes the Secretary-General most recent report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487) and strongly supports his numerous initiatives to end sexual violence, the most recent of which was his call for an immediate global ceasefire.

Jordan is not a country in conflict, it is a country that provides a great deal of humanitarian support as a host country for refugees fleeing conflict in the region. It has provided safe shelter and humanitarian assistance to those in need, and is actively participating in international efforts to combat terrorism, violent extremism and dark ideologies that perpetrators and extremist groups like Da'esh use as a pretext to commit heinous crimes against humanity, including sexual violence.

My country ranks among the police-contributing countries to peacekeeping missions. It has incorporated the participation of more women into the police force, the enhancement of internal and external accountability mechanisms and human rights as a key to successful peacekeeping operations — into its national action plan for 2018 to 2021.

It is through gender equality, women's participation and a gender-sensitive approach to humanitarian responses, as well as a focus on women's agency in the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization, that we can arrive at stable and peaceful communities.

A survivor-centred approach, tending to the needs of survivors of such atrocities and holding perpetrators accountable before the law are vital to delivering justice to those victims. It also helps deter future crimes, thus protecting societies, promoting a culture of peace and sustaining security.

It is not enough to listen to the victims; it is not enough to shoulder their suffering and voice their pain; we need to collectively make every effort to ensure that we do not re-victimize them and must protect them by reinforcing the rule of law and the pillars of equality and peace.

**Annex 36****Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Kenya to the United Nations, Susan Mwangi**

Kenya extends its compliments to the Federal Republic of Germany for remaining seized on the women and peace and security agenda. Addressing conflict-related sexual violence is a human security issue. Furthermore, no one should ever suffer the scourge and indignity of being sexually violated — in conflict situations or otherwise. We therefore thank both Germany and the Dominican Republic for their continued work as the current co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, championed by Namibia in 2000, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the review year of Silencing the Guns in Africa. As we look back and ahead on our commitments to the mandates regarding conflict-related sexual violence, my delegation welcomes the call by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, and the other civil society speakers, from the Central African Republic and Myanmar, who reminded us of the need to move from resolutions to results, the centrality of accountability and the need to maintain a survivor-centred approach, in line with resolution 2467 (2019).

Gender inequality, the discriminatory perception of gender role and human trafficking and exploitation are among the factors that touch directly on women and contribute to the disproportionate impact on women and girls in both conflict and non-conflict situations. Additionally, the lack of women in leadership roles and the lack of preventive, inclusive and accessible judicial and social protection systems play a key role in propagating sexual violence in conflict. Unaccountability and impunity thrive in such environments.

My delegation also recognizes that addressing sexual violence in conflict is a collective endeavour, and not just a women's affair. Creating awareness, training and ownership of the process must involve the whole of society for sustainable results. We therefore believe that it is critical, despite our diverse cultural and social norms, to take a whole-of-society approach, where young boys and men can also see their role in championing and implementing the women and peace and security agenda.

In 2016, Kenya inaugurated its national action plan, with strategies for strengthening its judicial mechanisms and ensuring a survivor-centred approach in the fight against sexual violence in conflict, within the framework of resolution 1325 (2000) and the women and peace and security agenda. The operationalization of those strategies has ensured a conflict- and gender-sensitive approach in addressing matters pertaining to gender-based violence. Our national action plan is aptly known as “Kuhusisha Wanawake ni Kudumisha Amani”, or “to Involve Women is to Sustain Peace” — and has been translated into local languages in partnership with civil society.

In April, Kenya rolled out phase II of our national action plan for 2020 to 2024, having completed the benchmarks of phase I, which ended in 2018. The 2019 review and assessment process of the implementation of phase I highlighted increased women participation at all decision-making levels in all institutions and mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution. It also revealed enhanced prevention and reporting of sexual and gender-based violence and increased protection of women and girls against violence. Additionally, enhanced accountability and timely and effective access to justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence were observed.

Some of the priorities of phase II include addressing climate-related issues that exacerbate the risk of sexual violence and the increased vulnerability of women and girls in conflicts arising from natural disasters and intercommunal and pastoral violence over natural resources. In the semi-arid lands of Kenya, the distances women and girls walk in search for water, for example, increases their vulnerability to conflict and puts them at risk of sexual violence.

Kenya's Government has undertaken critical initiatives and has reached key milestones in translating our commitments into compliance.

For example, Kenya has adopted a survivor-centred approach through legal frameworks in place to address sexual and gender-based violence, including Kenya's Constitution, which contains provisions on gender equality and guarantees a wide range of rights for both men and women. Kenya has also made considerable strides in addressing sexual-based violence, including through the Sexual Offences Act, whose primary purpose is to ensure justice for survivors.

Our national guidelines on the management of sexual violence and our training of military and police personnel on sexual and gender-based violence include essential procedures and services for survivors of sexual violence. The review of standard operating procedures for the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence includes gender-sensitive desks in police stations, where the first point of contact is a woman officer, as well as the timely referral of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to seek medical attention. Those efforts have resulted in increased dignity for survivors, reduced silence and greater reporting of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as less stigma towards survivors.

We also invest in relief for, and the recovery of, survivors. There are various initiatives in place aimed at enhancing income generation by women at the grass-roots level, including those recovering from violent conflicts. Some examples of that include the Women Enterprise Fund, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and the Uwezo Fund.

With regard to women's leadership and participation in key peace positions, our Government has appointed women as leaders in key positions on the peace-conflict continuum. For the first time, the Kenya Defence Forces has a female major general, who is in charge of personnel and logistics. The President also appointed Kenya's first woman Cabinet Secretary for Defence. Women have also been involved in the design and implementation of the national conflict early-warning and early-response mechanisms, where women chair at least one third of the 233 sub-county peace committees across the country. Women are also being trained as mediators across fragile and conflict-affected counties.

Moreover, the deployment of Kenyan women in peace support operations stands at 19 per cent, surpassing the United Nations-recommended 15 per cent. These are key leadership docketts that are central to the prevention and management of armed conflict. These initiatives also enhance accountability by ensuring that women are not only survivors, but also key leaders in making decisions and formulating strategies pertaining to sexual violence in conflict.

We have also established a whole-of-government reporting mechanism. In all Government ministries, focal officers have been appointed to champion, monitor and report on the implementation of the women and peace and security national action plan within their sectors.

In addition, we have set up a task force on women, peace and security within the Gender Sector Working Group as a platform to bring together public and private actors to advance our national gender priorities. Partnership between the police



and civil society in raising awareness about sexual and gender-based violence has reduced barriers to accessing police stations to report cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

Community-based programmes to end cultural and structural violence against women have also been critical. For the victim, the stigma and shame attached to sexual violence often prevents disclosure. The Nyumba Kumi initiative acts as both a preventive and a protective measure, whereby vulnerable groups, including survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, can find safe homes and safe reporting platforms.

On our commitment to regional and international instruments, Kenya participates and supports African Union (AU) initiatives that address inequalities and sexual violence in conflict, including the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the 2018 African Union policy on prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse for peace support operations. The AU Commission has also adopted a zero-tolerance policy on sexual violence in times of conflict and peace. The AU Continental Results Framework is geared towards monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa. We are pleased to be among the Member States that validated the Framework in March 2019. Since then, recent efforts have focused on ensuring that Kenya's national action plan aligns its monitoring and evaluation tools with the Framework. The Council needs to integrate these continental and subregional instruments into their work and decisions.

Kenya has also ratified a number of key international instruments focused on addressing sexual and gender-based violence, such as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Although we have made progress towards the implementation of the various initiatives, we note that we still face challenges. We must expand the scope of prevention to ensure it is the preserve of not just security agencies but the whole of society, including local, grass-roots actors and religious leaders. We must also address the persistent lack of reliable baseline records and inadequate documentation of good practices at the local levels. In addition, the enactment of the Sexual Offences Act has not been matched with adequate legal training of officers and agents. As a result, there are still inconsistencies when it comes to judicial action.

The Security Council and its secretariat have an important role to play when it comes to monitoring compliance with its own resolutions and acting upon breaches of same, including listing credibly suspected perpetrators and enacting sanctions. That has to be done in partnership with Member States in order to enhance accountability. However, there are concerns in the manner in which the secretariat has been reporting on suspected cases. In many occasions, the relevant offices in the secretariat have presented cases of suspected sexual and other violations against women and children as facts without proper investigations. Many such allegations have been proved to be untrue. A recent example is the 2020 report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2020/525), which contained inaccuracies on this issue and others, including glaring inconsistencies, contradictions and outright impossibilities.

When unverified accusations find their way into the Security Council, it is not only unhelpful for the would-be victims of sexual violations, but it puts in doubt the credibility of such reports. To retain the usefulness of reports adopted by the Security Council, it needs to ensure that the reports adopted are factual and meet the evidential threshold. Offices in the secretariat that publish misleading reports should be held accountable.



In conclusion, we reiterate Kenya's continued engagement and commitment in all matters pertaining to the implementation of recommendations contained in resolution 1325 (2000), including subsequent related resolutions and those regarding conflict-related sexual violence.

**Annex 37****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations, Christian Wenaweser**

This year is a pivotal one for the women and peace and security agenda. In addition to marking the twentieth anniversary of foundational resolution 1325 (2000) and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the visionary Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it also marks 75 years since the advent of the United Nations itself, with its founding promise of gender equality. While some progress has been made since then, gender inequality and discrimination remain major challenges. Had we more effectively addressed such inequalities and discrimination in past decades, we would find ourselves in a better place today to respond to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Discussions on conflict-related sexual violence have been dominated by an approach that looks at women and girls primarily as victims and survivors. As important as the protection pillar remains, the participation dimension is also essential, as it emphasizes women's agency to address and prevent such violence. As a contribution to further strengthening the participation pillar of the women and peace and security agenda, Liechtenstein has commissioned a research project from the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security on the impact of female peacekeepers and members of armed forces on respect for international humanitarian law.

Harmful gender stereotypes and abusive power dynamics are the root cause of sexual and gender-based violence. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence, but men and boys are also targeted. The annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the work of the Liechtenstein-based human rights organization All Survivors Project document rape, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys in a large number of conflict situations, many of which are on the Council's agenda.

Resolution 2467 (2019) and its survivor-centred approach are an important step forward in the women and peace and security agenda. Monitoring, analysis and reporting focus more consistently on the gender-specific nature of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations against all affected populations in all situations of concern, including men and boys. That is of the utmost relevance, as sexual violence against men and boys in particular continues to be underreported owing to a lack of legal frameworks, cultural taboos and fear of stigmatization. In a time of quarantines, lockdowns and other restrictions on movement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is particularly important to ensure that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have access to reporting mechanisms and necessary services. In addition to ensuring the implementation of resolution 2467 (2019), we call on the Council to include conflict-related sexual violence as a designation criterion in targeted sanctions regimes.

Accountability is an essential part of the fight against conflict-related sexual violence. The international criminal justice system has done groundbreaking work in that regard. Last year, the International Criminal Court (ICC) found warlord Bosco Ntaganda guilty of 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is a milestone verdict, as sexual violence crimes committed against men were held to the same standard as those committed against women. The ongoing proceedings at the International Court of Justice against Myanmar's military and security forces in the context of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of

Genocide is another promising development to strengthen accountability for sexual violence crimes.

In too many instances, perpetrators of sexual violence continue to enjoy impunity, and victims and survivors are left without assistance. We call upon the Security Council to refer situations such as in the Syrian Arab Republic and Myanmar to the ICC. We will continue our strong support for the accountability mechanisms created by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. We remain committed to strengthening criminal justice and accountability for sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, including by supporting the important work by UN-Women and Justice Rapid Response.

**Annex 38****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the United Nations**

We commend Germany, as President of the Security Council for the month of July, on convening this important annual debate.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statements submitted on behalf of the European Union (see annex 25) and the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security (see annex 20).

Lithuania remains a strong advocate of the highest standards of conduct and continues to call for strong measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. Once again, we express our principled position in support of the zero-tolerance policy, and call for full accountability for all civilian, military and police personnel, both in the United Nations and in other international peace operations.

We strongly support the Secretary-General's leadership in dealing with this difficult challenge, which calls for a system-wide response based on the pillars of prevention, enforcement, victim support and accountability. We commend the Secretary General's commitment to ensuring that tackling sexual exploitation and abuse remains at the top of the Organization's agenda, including through the work of the Circle of Leadership to combat sexual exploitation and violence in conflict. We also welcome the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, her Office and all others across the Secretariat working on this issue.

To address today's topic, we would like to focus on three major issues: first, addressing root causes of sexual violence in conflict-related settings; secondly, fighting impunity; and, thirdly, identifying the responsibilities of United Nations peacekeepers.

First, addressing the root causes of sexual violence in conflict-related settings is vital. Sexual violence in armed conflict, to a major extent and in essence, remains an issue that plagues and exacerbates many contemporary conflicts. Women, girls, men, boys and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community can all be victims of sexual violence in conflict-affected settings. Many studies have shown how unequal gender relations and patriarchal norms exacerbate crises. While women and girls remain the largest group of victims affected by conflict-related sexual violence, there is a growing number of incidents of sexual violence reported by boys and men, as well as violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Lithuania stresses that it is of the utmost importance to address the root causes of sexual violence in conflict-related settings. Sexual violence in conflicts cannot be perceived solely as a standalone social problem arising wholly because of conflict and one which will naturally die down when peace is restored. Sexual violence is closely connected and interlinked with pre-existing power relations, social orientation and other forms of gender-based violence preceding the descent into conflict. Those fundamental issues must be addressed in order to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence and to shift the paradigm. In that context, it is crucially important to uphold human rights standards and improve respect for human rights. The full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and of all relevant subsequent Council resolutions, especially those focused on conflict-related sexual violence remains of the utmost importance. We must redouble our efforts and consolidate all political will to maintain a course towards eradicating unjustifiable acts of sexual violence, which has many faces, including as a tactic of

war and terrorism and in post-conflict settings. Holistic approaches are critical if we are to address the root causes of sexual violence in conflict.

Secondly, we must fight impunity. Combating impunity for sexual violence is a central aspect of deterring and preventing such crimes. It is essential that all reported allegations be promptly and fully investigated in order to ensure justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators. Unfortunately, the conditions and the situation are only getting harder. Already a chronically underreported crime, conflict-related sexual violence has been further obscured by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research shows that COVID-19 has a significant and detrimental impact on increased violence against women in a domestic setting, including sexual violence. Unfortunately, conflict settings create even more vulnerable environments with fewer possibilities for support due to physical-contact restrictions. COVID-19 has affected various aspects of the rule-of-law response, including accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. All additional virus-related challenges should be fully evaluated and taken into account in the context of fighting against impunity.

Furthermore, every effort must be made to give victims all the assistance and support they need to report allegations and ensure that there will be no repercussions for those speaking out against their abusers. More women in police forces and prosecutorial bodies could make women and girls feel safer in reporting sexual violence, rape and other abuse without fear of exposing themselves to further violence. Accountability cannot be achieved if civilians are afraid to report or do not know their rights and whom to complain to. Building trust and ensuring timely assistance and access to information on national judicial processes is crucial.

At the same time, it is important to use every opportunity to disseminate information about the United Nations and national processes put forward in order to respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. To that end, there is a need to ensure close cooperation with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with victims in order to improve the protection of whistle-blowers and ease the reporting and investigation of allegations. Lithuania continues to be a trusted partner of, and donor to, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which supports local NGOs, including those working on the issue of sexual violence in conflict.

In his most recent annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487), the Secretary-General stresses that strengthening national rule of law institutions is critical in order to fight impunity as well as to prevent sexual crimes related to conflict in the future. Good examples on the ground prove that there is a possibility to turn words and statements into positive action on the ground. For example, the criminal code of Colombia includes extensive references to sexual violence in the context of armed conflict. In this case, a legal base brings needed attention to sexual crimes in conflict and establishes the procedure for how to bring perpetrators to justice.

The third issue is the responsibilities of United Nations peacekeepers. Lithuania attaches great importance to peacekeeping — a core task of the Organization and its flagship activity in extremely challenging environments around the world. The protection of civilians is at the centre of peacekeeping, and any act perpetrated against the most vulnerable is intolerable. It is devastating that in certain instances the most vulnerable suffer sexual abuse by those who are there to protect them. The sexual misconduct of peacekeepers undermines the fundamental goals of peacekeeping operations. A number of studies have shown how sexual exploitation affects the perceived impartiality of peace operations and contributes to the mistrust of host societies. Therefore, the deployment of women protection advisers, the provision of human rights and gender-awareness training for staff to be deployed in

peacekeeping missions and the inclusion of sexual violence issues in peacekeeping mandates should be further expanded.

It is important to note that the actual responsibility for investigating and punishing misconduct by uniformed personnel falls to Member States. We call on all troop- and police-contributing countries to proactively address, within national jurisdictions, all sexual misconduct by peacekeepers and to ensure justice for the victims.

To conclude, we must galvanize our efforts to address the root causes of sexual violence in conflicts, to work towards full gender equality in law and in practice and to continue the implementation of existing commitments. There must be no backsliding on what has been agreed. We owe it to the victims and our own contingents to set high standards and to stick to them. We must stand by the objective to enhance the credibility and the effectiveness of the United Nations to deliver.

**Annex 39****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Luxembourg to the United Nations**

[Original: French]

Luxembourg aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and with the statement submitted on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. Despite the significant progress made at the political level and on the ground, sexual violence in conflict persists. We cannot condone that. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/487) underlines, we must act very specifically on behalf of survivors to prevent sexual violence and make their needs the focus of our commitment. We must also tackle the structural root causes that perpetuate and fuel such violence. In that context, combating impunity and strengthening the access of survivors to justice and reparations are priorities.

To give a voice to the victims, in March 2019 Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg invited some 40 survivors of sexual violence to Luxembourg to testify at the international conference Stand Speak Rise Up to End Sexual Violence in Fragile Environments. It was the first international event of its kind to focus on the plight of survivors.

Luxembourg will continue its commitment both politically and in the context of its development cooperation and humanitarian action. In 2019, we allocated more than €13.2 million to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Luxembourg supported Dr. Mukwege's Panzi Hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We also financed the construction of a regional centre for the medical and psychosocial care of women victims of violence, particularly sexual violence, in Senegal's Casamance region. We are a long-standing partner of Justice Rapid Response, and we have supported the work of the International Center for Transitional Justice in Colombia and Tunisia for several years. In 2020, Luxembourg continues to support the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross to combat sexual violence, particularly by funding a research project on the prevention of sexual violence. As part of the implementation of the women and peace and security national action plan 2018-2023, Luxembourg is also co-financing a capacity-building project that focuses on gender, which is being implemented by NATO in Jordan.

Luxembourg is convinced that the fight against sexual violence cannot succeed in a vacuum. It must be part of an integrated policy to combat gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination. In the context of its feminist foreign policy, Luxembourg applies a multidimensional approach to combating sexual and gender-based violence, based on the promotion of gender equality, the empowerment of women and the defence of human rights. In that context, we attach particular importance to the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights, which are also an essential component of the survivor-centred approach.

In its foreign policy, Luxembourg will continue to be committed to universal access to health and well-being in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 3, including access to quality and comprehensive health services, information and widespread and affordable sexual and reproductive health education. We deeply regret the challenges to sexual and reproductive health and rights in multilateral forums. We must make every effort to overcome the restrictions on access to sexual and reproductive health care in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic. Both those issues risk having devastating consequences for women and girls and causing an unprecedented setback for women's rights in our time. In such situations of crisis and fragility, women and girls are even more vulnerable to the impact of sexual violence, necessitating prevention and awareness-raising efforts.



Members can count on our commitment, and we count on the commitment of the Security Council to heeding the call of survivors and preventing sexual violence.

**Annex 40****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Mexico thanks Germany and the Dominican Republic for convening this debate.

Twenty-five years ago, by adopting the Beijing Platform for Action, States committed themselves to increasing women's participation in conflict resolution and decision-making, as well as to protecting women living in situations of armed conflict, which was also mandated by this organ in its resolution 1325 (2000).

Unfortunately, despite numerous calls to end sexual violence, it continues to be used as a tactic of war, causing deep trauma that fractures the social fabric and communities. It is perpetrated by both State forces and illegal armed groups. In some cases, it has become systematic and the incidence of impunity is alarming despite being a violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

However, the opening this week of the first trial on gender grounds before the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud, accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes as a result of forced marriages, rape and sexual slavery, represents a milestone in the fight against impunity and the reparation of victims. Mexico will closely follow the development of that case and will reiterate its full support for the ICC. Strengthening the relationship between the Council and the ICC may be instrumental in closing the accountability gap for those egregious crimes.

We also acknowledge the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, Ms. Pramila Patten, and the work of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. The accession in 2019 of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to that initiative is a positive development.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has created challenges for conflict prevention and peacekeeping. Community violence has escalated in some regions, leading to an increase in conflict-related sexual violence. Some mitigation measures for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) have exacerbated inequalities, exposing women and girls to higher levels of domestic violence in their homes. Prevention policies must put women and girls at the centre of their response, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations. We commend the publication of the guidelines *Implications of COVID-19 for the Prevention of and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*.

While women and girls are the primary victims of such violations of their rights, men and boys also experience them. It is unacceptable for people to be persecuted based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or disability status. It is therefore crucial to ensure a survivor-centred approach to preventing and responding to that scourge in safe and secure conditions, recognizing that survivors are not a homogeneous group.

The social stigmatization to which victims are exposed in their communities can put their physical integrity at risk and lead to psychological trauma, which, if not properly treated, can continue for decades. Victims must therefore be empowered to become key and resilient actors for recovery, reconciliation, development and sustainable peace.

The resurgence of hostilities, militarization, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, mass displacement of the population and the increasing violent extremism leading to terrorism can result in conflict. However, discrimination, structural marginalization, exclusion, the struggle for natural resources and inequalities of all kinds also trigger violence.

The full, effective and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes cannot be achieved without addressing the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence. The social norms, stereotypes and unequal power relations engrained in patriarchal societies consign women and girls to a secondary role and prevent them from reaching their full potential. States must therefore ensure the conditions for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

More than 10 years since the adoption of resolution 1888 (2009), compliance by parties with the normative framework for prevention and sexual violence in armed conflict is very limited, particularly in terms of accountability and the delivery of justice. We must not allow those atrocities to be mainstreamed in post-conflict societies. It is unacceptable that to date, 42 of the 54 parties listed in the annex to the Secretary-General's report have not entered into any commitments and that 30 of them — 71 per cent — have been on the list for more than five years.

Women and girls face additional barriers to access to justice linked to cultural, social and economic issues. Special protection must be given to women human rights defenders and peacebuilders, who work in increasingly difficult conditions due to threats and intimidation.

In line with its commitment to gender equality, Mexico has supported the inclusion of the women and peace and security agenda as a fundamental part of the Generation Equality Forum, to be held in 2021. Mexico calls on the Security Council to do the following.

First, it should systematically strengthen mandates for the protection of civilians in peace operations with women and child protection units and advisers.

Second, it should promote the collection of disaggregated data and specific early warning indicators on possible patterns of sexual violence.

Third, it should encourage more meaningful participation of women at different stages of conflict, in all activities of peace operations and special political missions and in the negotiation and implementation of peace and ceasefire agreements and ensure the inclusion of provisions on sexual violence in such agreements.

Fourth, it should consider, where relevant, the adoption of sanctions targeting the perpetrators listed in the annex to the Secretary-General's report.

Fifth, the Council should strengthen cooperation with the ICC to close the impunity gap, including, where appropriate, by referring to the Court situations where war crimes and crimes against humanity involving sexual abuse and exploitation are committed.

Sixth, it should strengthen the capacities of the justice and security sectors with a gender-sensitive perspective and provide integrated care, including medical and psychological support and access to health services and sexual and reproductive rights for women and girls.

Seventh, it should ensure that survivors have full access, on an equal footing, to compensation and reparation programmes for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence as part of transitional justice, including innovative strategies to achieve sustainable funding.

Eighth, it should support mechanisms and mandates for the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence and achieve better coordination among them.

Finally, Mexico reiterates the need to further implement the commitments made by the signatories to the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, especially those aimed at strengthening the United Nations zero-tolerance policy and ensuring that personnel to be deployed in peace operations comply with the Organization's standards, since acts of intimidation and sexual violence are unacceptable.

## Annex 41

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations

My delegation would like to thank Germany, President of the Security Council for the month of July, and the Dominican Republic, co-Chair of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, for jointly organizing this open debate on a very important issue — conflict-related sexual violence: turning commitments into compliance — as we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the milestone resolution 1325 (2000), the twenty-fifth anniversary of the visionary Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 75 years since the foundation of the United Nations, with its promise of gender equality enshrined in its Charter.

United Nations reports reveal that 1.3 billion people worldwide, which is 35 per cent of the world population, are sexual violence survivors. This is alarming and despicable and calls for urgent and immediate actions to not only eradicate sexual violence in all circumstances — be it in times of armed conflict, in humanitarian crises or difficult contexts, such as the current one with the coronavirus disease — but also to implement a holistic approach founded on cooperation and prevention and sharing best practices. In this regard, I would like to highlight the following points.

Violence is always condemnable. However, sexual violence during armed conflict and global crises is even more reprehensible. Only a few years ago, the world was brought to tears by the appalling and poignant testimonies of Ms. Nadia Murad and other victims reporting their tragic ordeals. Unfortunately, history repeated itself with shocking cases of other victims of rape, torture and unimaginable savagery and brutality, depicting a disturbing trend of using sexual violence.

The Kingdom of Morocco strongly condemns these practices of another age, which unfortunately continue today. Sexual violence affects victims and plagues communities and societies in their entirety, whether it is used as a tactic of war, a weapon of terrorism or an act of coercion, intimidation, retaliation or reprisal against the family or the larger community. It aims to terrorize, harm the body, maim dignity, destroy social fabric and destroy all reconstruction efforts at their root.

The Kingdom of Morocco, as a member of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, chaired by Canada, and of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity, led by Colombia, fully subscribes to its international commitments to combat all forms of sexual violence, including in times of conflict, and considers them barbaric, brutal and inhuman methods and practices with serious consequences for the establishment of lasting peace and reconciliation.

Because of the systematic and premeditated nature of acts of sexual violence, the Kingdom of Morocco believes that innovation in the approach to dealing with this scourge is urgent. In this regard, there is a need to adopt and implement a comprehensive and inclusive approach that takes into account the complexity of the root causes of sexual violence; restores the dignity of victims; addresses the stigma surrounding victims, including children born of this violence; presents firm accountability measures against the perpetrators who act against international humanitarian law, human rights and the Geneva Conventions of 1949; and invests in rebuilding and sustaining peace.

Prevention is key to eradicating sexual violence, namely, through the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment; guaranteeing victims' access to legal, medical and psychosocial services; using sanctions as a tool to dissuade sexual violence and to coerce and constrain the individuals involved; ensuring protection for victims and witnesses in order to enable men to speak out without fear or shame; strengthening existing services for women and girls and establishing complementary mechanisms for men and boys; and engaging both those advocating the elimination

of sexual violence against women and girls and those addressing sexual violence against men and boys and making them work together to achieve their goals.

Religious leaders have a powerful and persuasive role to play in combating the use of religion to justify sexual violence. They should be encouraged to speak out firmly against this scourge. Cooperation with local actors and community leaders is also crucial, as they can identify early warning signs of acts of sexual violence and propose appropriate prevention strategies.

There is a need for more research on the range of sexual violence, its perpetrators and its victims in order to build the evidence base from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Whereas neither women and girls nor men and boys are spared from being victims of sexual violence, there is widespread ignorance about the shocking details of sexual violence against men and boys in conflicts. Some of the barriers that prevent the majority of male victims from reporting sexual violence to the authorities are the sense of dignity, stigmatization and a fear of being singled out and mocked. In addition, the lack of comprehensive data on the issue remains one of the biggest obstacles to address it. While a big majority of reports focus on sexual violence affecting women and girls, reports on sexual violence affecting men and boys are rare.

To conclude, Morocco commends United Nations efforts to eliminate sexual violence in conflicts, namely, through the United Nations campaign against sexual violence in conflicts and the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten. Secondly, Morocco also welcomes the efforts of Member States to implement relevant Security Council resolutions at the national level and welcomes the growing number of signed and negotiated action plans for the protection of victims of sexual violence.

Last but not least, Morocco welcomes the initiatives taken in the context of peacekeeping operations aimed at combating violence and sexual violence, as well as the appointment of advisers to combat sexual violence and the adoption of codes of conduct, military action plans and zero-tolerance policies in the armed forces.

**Annex 42****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations, Hau Do Suan**

Myanmar welcomes the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. There is no question about the importance of the women and peace and security agenda of the Council in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence. At the same time, it is pertinent to review the achievements of the Council on the implementation of the agenda in the past 20 years, apart from the adoption of nine more resolutions following resolution 1325 (2000).

Only durable peace and sustained stability can bring an end to conflict-related violence. Having experienced over seven decades of protracted ethnic insurgencies, Myanmar is striving to end decades-long conflicts and to achieve sustainable peace and national reconciliation. As women and children bear the brunt of armed conflict, we are trying to tackle the root causes of the conflict to mitigate the suffering of the most vulnerable.

Myanmar upholds the policy of zero tolerance of any form of sexual violence, including conflict-related ones. To demonstrate its strong commitment to addressing conflict-related sexual violence, in December 2018 the Government of Myanmar signed a joint communiqué with the United Nations on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence.

Subsequently, in March 2019, the National Committee on the Prevention of and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence was established to implement the joint communiqué. A national work plan has been drafted with technical assistance from the United Nations and is currently under review.

As domestic legal reform is essential for the effective implementation of the protection of the rights of women and girls, a bill on the prevention of and response to violence against women has been drafted and is currently under review by the Bill Committee of the Parliament. The new bill reinforces the protection of women from all forms of violence, including domestic and sexual violence.

The One-Stop Women Support Centres and 24-hour help lines have been set up to provide women and girls with physical, legal, psychological and social support. The One-Stop Women Support Centres and help lines are operating 24 hours, 7 days a week, even during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, to provide crucial services, as women and girls are more vulnerable during lockdowns. Victims of sexual violence are also provided with one-time financial support for rehabilitation. To assist with case management for gender-based violence, a new set of standard operating procedures has been developed since 2019 using a survivor-centred approach. Clinical guidelines are also being developed for responding to rape.

The new child rights law, which was adopted in July 2019, criminalizes sexual violence, requiring the Government, the Tatmadaw and armed groups to take necessary measures to protect children from sexual violence.

The Government is working closely with UN-Women on formulating and implementing the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2022) for gender equality and women's empowerment. Moreover, reports on the protection of the rights of women and the prevention of sexual violence against women and girls have been regularly submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and included in the Universal Periodic Review process of the Human Rights Council.



With the aim of ending ethnic armed conflict and ushering in a democratic federal union, the Government has been convening the Union Peace Conference — the 21st Century Panglong. Even in the midst of formidable challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government is making relentless efforts to advance the peace process. The fourth session of the Peace Conference is slated to be held in August 2020. The Government is also promoting the meaningful participation of women in the peace process, with more women delegates now involved in different committees on the basic principles of the Union Peace Accord.

In response to the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire during the pandemic, the Tatmadaw announced a three-month nation-wide ceasefire, from 10 May to 31 August, to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The unilateral ceasefire applies to all conflict areas except where terrorist groups have taken positions.

In terms of accountability, the Independent Commission of Enquiry submitted its final report to the President in January. The Criminal Investigation and Prosecution Body, led by the Union Attorney-General, is undertaking investigations in prioritized places and cases out of 13 locations included in the report.

The court-martial to prosecute the Gutarpyin incident was completed in April this year. Three military personnel, including one senior military officer, were found guilty in the incident, and actions have been taken against them. Also, in July this year, another court-martial was formed to conduct an investigation into the incidents of Maung Nu village and Chut Pyin village.

It is regrettable that this year's annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487) did not properly reflect the situation on the ground, especially the challenges faced by the Government of Myanmar. It is disappointing that the atrocities committed by terrorists against women and children were not reflected in the report.

My delegation believes that accountability is an important component of preventing sexual violence in conflicts. However, it is not the only solution to prevent or stop sexual violence. The countries concerned have the primary responsibility to protect and prevent such crimes against innocent people in conflict situations. A holistic approach led by the country concerned is the best way to bring about a definitive end to conflict-related sexual violence.

In tackling the issue of sexual violence in conflict, the international community should be guided by universally accepted norms of impartiality, non-selectivity and non-politicization of the issue. Only a constructive approach undertaken through dialogue and by providing assistance to the country concerned would bring about positive results in efforts to resolve the problem.

With the constructive cooperation and engagement of the international community, we are confident that we will be able to reduce, and ultimately end, the suffering of the victims of sexual violence. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in order to advance in addressing conflict-related sexual violence in Myanmar.

My delegation rejects the statement of the briefer Khin Ohmar, which is based on unfounded, biased and politically motivated narratives and does not in any way contribute value to the debate. Her views are mainly based on narratives from the Independent International Fact-finding Mission on Myanmar and other mechanisms with which my Government has refused to cooperate owing to their lack of objectivity and independence.

**Annex 43****Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations**

We would like to thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for organizing today's debate.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement submitted by the delegation of Canada on behalf of 62 member States of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (see annex 20) and with the statement submitted by the delegation of the European Union (see annex 25).

As the world is facing a global health crisis with an unprecedented impact on all aspects of human security and with a disproportionate effect on women and girls in all their diversity, the Kingdom of the Netherlands remains ever more committed to supporting the United Nations efforts to prevent and address sexual violence in conflict.

On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), the present open debate on sexual violence in conflict provides an excellent opportunity to reiterate and strengthen our collective commitment to preventing and addressing sexual violence in conflict.

The Secretary-General provides us with a clear message in his present report (S/2020/487): we must not forget the profound human suffering that is at the heart of the sexual violence in conflict agenda. We are here today for the victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflict. We are speaking about a crime that is widely invisible and underreported — hence the importance of letting disregarded voices be heard in the Security Council.

In that regard, let me express my gratitude to Nadia Carine Therese Fornel-Poutou, from the Association of Central African Women Lawyers, and Khin Omar, speaking on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for taking the time to share their experiences with the Council. Their concerns must be at the centre of our common effort to move from commitment to compliance. Let me also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for briefing the Council.

Allow me to highlight three areas of action for strengthening efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict.

First, with regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights, any response to sexual violence must prioritize the rights, needs and wishes of survivors. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) puts the implementation of a survivor-centred approach to addressing sexual violence in conflict under further pressure. It is becoming increasingly challenging for survivors to access essential life-saving services, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights is a fundamental part of a survivor-centred approach to sexual violence in conflict and must be put at the forefront of the response. Those organizations working in conflict situations where sexual violence in conflict occurs must provide adequate and comprehensive services to survivors in all their diversity, including sexual and reproductive health care, mental health care and psychosocial support, protection, legal services, access to justice and support for livelihoods. Concrete and sustained actions must be taken to ensure diverse survivors can claim their right to such services. Preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual violence in conflict, is a prerequisite for the realization of women's rights and their ability to meaningfully participate in

peace, political and security processes. Also, the inclusion of disrupted communities, of which survivors of sexual violence in conflict are part, in the response must ensure collective healing, as well as the reintegration of survivors. In that journey of healing, the importance of accountability and justice cannot be understated — which brings me to my second point.

In terms of accountability for sexual violence, States have the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute violations and uphold international human rights standards. The lack of criminal accountability for sexual violence in conflict in countries affected by conflict is concerning. The international community must therefore play a role in supporting the delivery of justice at the local level.

For justice to be truly survivor-centred, it must be holistic and comprehensive and occur at multiple levels. Next to international accountability mechanisms, a greater focus on survivor-centred national and local justice mechanisms for the prosecution of sexual violence in conflict must be ensured. National and local prosecution should be close and accessible to survivors, as this is where most perpetrators and survivors and their communities remain. We would like to emphasize the importance of the reconstruction of the rule of law as a central part of peace processes, with special attention to the local and national laws in which gender and the rights of women are fully anchored.

When States are unable or unwilling to prosecute, the International Criminal Court (ICC) can play an important role in holding perpetrators to account. The Rome Statute of the ICC was the first international instrument to include various forms of sexual violence as underlying acts of both crimes against humanity and war crimes. We remind the Security Council of its power to refer situations to the ICC, and call upon all States to become a party to the Rome Statute and to adopt the most serious crimes into their national legislation.

With regard to dedicated sanctions for sexual violence, beyond criminal accountability we must make use of other tools at our disposal to fight impunity. Targeted sanctions against perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict are one of them.

The gap assessment presented in the latest report of the Secretary-General, pursuant to resolution 2467 (2019), makes painfully clear the impunity in which crimes of sexual violence in conflict remain steeped. It is telling and confronting that, of the 65 parties that have been listed since 2010, only one has been delisted. By contrast, 42 listed parties have not assumed any commitments, while they have been listed for over five years.

As a world and as an international community, we are not doing enough to change this. A true survivor-centred approach takes root in prevention, as well as the assurance that those who have torn lives apart will not be allowed to continue doing so. Impunity is precisely one of the main drivers of sexual violence in conflict, further fuelling a cycle of violence. In 2018, when the Netherlands was an elected member of the Council, we pushed for the systematic inclusion of sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for all existing sanctions regimes.

We would like to reiterate the opportunity that we have to strengthen our joint prevention and response by systematically and explicitly incorporating and applying sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion in sanctions regimes. Recognizing the meaningful steps that have been taken in that regard, with specific designation criteria on sexual violence having been included in seven out of the current 14 sanctions regimes, we call upon the Council to extend this practice to all remaining relevant sanctions regimes and to ensure adequate follow-up. The Council should not hesitate to list individuals or entities solely for sexual violence. This

sends a clear message to perpetrators that sexual violence in itself warrants United Nations sanctions.

To conclude, we call upon the Council and all Member States to ensure that women and peace and security, in particular preventing and addressing sexual violence in conflict, is an integral part of country-specific discussions and mandates. We must not allow our common efforts to prevent and address sexual violence in conflict to be dwindled down to an annual discussion in the Council. We need instructive mandates on sexual violence in conflict in order to translate our common priorities into action.

**Annex 44****Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of Nigeria to the United Nations, Samson S. Iteboje**

I thank the Foreign Minister, His Excellency Mr. Heiko Maas, and the delegation of Germany for organizing this important debate. Our appreciation also goes to all the briefers for sharing their perspectives on this very important subject.

The term “conflict-related sexual violence”, as reflected in the Secretary General’s report for 2019 (S/2020/487), refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.

That link may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator, who is often affiliated with a State or a non-State armed group, which includes terrorist entities; the profile of the victim, who is frequently an actual or perceived member of a political, ethnic or religious minority group or targeted on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity; and the climate of impunity, which is generally associated with State collapse, cross-border consequences, such as displacement or trafficking, and/or violations of a ceasefire agreement. The term also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence or exploitation when committed in situations of conflict.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a pervasive human rights violation that prevents women and girls from reaching their full potential. It is an obstacle to women’s ability to live dignified lives, free from fear. During times of conflict and instability, it can also pose significant security challenges, as violence is normalized, while sexual violence is often used to punish and terrorize populations, fuel displacement and destroy the fabric of communities. The impact of such acts, if unchecked, further fuels extremism, instability and collapse of the rule of law.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has further compounded the problem, as the imposition of quarantines, curfews, lockdowns and other restrictions on movement have hampered the possibility for survivors of sexual-related violence to report new cases. This further heightens the existing structural, institutional and sociocultural barriers to seeking redress for such crimes.

The pandemic has also had a negative impact on the availability of immediate life-saving assistance and accessibility to other multisectoral aid for survivors of sexual violence in many settings. The majority of the shelters for gender-based violence survivors have been closed and mobile clinics and counselling services cancelled, as the already scarce resources are diverted to other areas impacted by the pandemic.

The Secretary-General’s report highlights areas of strength and weakness in the implementation of the conflict-related sexual violence mandate. His recommendations, if embraced, can enhance coordination and effectiveness. One gap identified was the significant lack of compliance with prevailing commitments. The problem of fragmentation and overlap in the United Nations system demands a framework for implementation and accountability, which, he argues, would increase the perceived or actual cost for perpetrators and serve as a deterrent.

Nigeria has had its fair share of conflict-related sexual violence, especially in the north-east, largely perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists. As has been the case since 2014, the Secretary-General’s annual report on conflict-related sexual violence contains an annex that rightly lists Boko Haram terrorists among the

“parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict in countries on the agenda of the Security Council” (*S/2020/487, para. 74*).

In its efforts to stem the tide and to prevent other potential human rights violations, the Nigerian Government has put in place a number of measures to address the situation in north-eastern Nigeria in a holistic manner. These measures centre on the issues of accountability for the crime of conflict-related sexual violence, the well-being of the survivor and prevention. The measures also emphasize respect for human rights and the rule of law, humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians, crisis prevention and stabilization, and resilience-building for sustainable development, as well as regional cross-border cooperation. Some of the specific steps taken in that regard include, but are not limited to, the following: the diligent prosecution of those found to have perpetrated the crime of conflict-related sexual violence; the provision of psychosocial support where survivors are provided with protection, reparations and holistic health and psychosocial services; the use of leaders at the national and local levels, including community, religious and traditional leaders, to play a more active role in advocating within communities against sexual violence in conflict; the creation of a human rights desk, working in a synergistic fashion between the National Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Defence to investigate and prosecute, where applicable, human rights abuses by the Nigerian military; and the establishment of a civil-military relations department in the Nigerian Defence Headquarters to enhance the civil-military relationship and information-sharing. Among other things, this is a trust-building mechanism so as to win the hearts and minds of civilians in the fight against Boko Haram.

The specific steps also include the provision of social and medical outreach for civilians by the military; the provision of ongoing workshops and training sessions for military personnel by the Office of the National Security Adviser on various human rights topics, including civilian protection, children in conflict, tracking civilian harm, sexual exploitation and abuse; the revision of the rules of engagement and the code of conduct of the Nigerian military to reflect international humanitarian and human rights standards; and comprehensive security sector reform. As part of this, the Nigerian Government, through its Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution, helped to facilitate the adoption and operationalization of the handover protocol on children and armed conflict, including the handing over of children in armed conflict encountered during operations to civilian child protection actors.

It should be pointed out that Nigeria does not see children in armed conflict as being in conflict with the law but as victims who must be protected. Also, with regard to the high number of unaccompanied, separated and orphaned children, the Government, through the National Emergency Management Agency and other humanitarian actors, is working towards the rehabilitation, reintegration and family reunification of children affected by Boko Haram.

Nigeria also established of the Protection Sector Working Group (PSWG), which is made up of all the protection response agencies, such as the National Human Rights Commission, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, the National Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Ministry of Women and Youth Development. Through the PSWG, Nigeria drafted a standard operating procedure (SOP) for the protection of vulnerable groups in emergency settings. The SOP serves as a tool for case management and referrals of survivors of human right abuses in the internally displaced person (IDP) camps.

Another specific measure is the launch and the ongoing implementation of the road map on preventing gender-based violence in the Lake Chad region. This road map was unveiled domestically in Nigeria in July 2018 and launched internationally

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in Berlin in September 2018. The road map is proactive in nature, aiming, first and foremost, to prevent possible cases of gender-based violence, especially in emergencies and humanitarian situations.

A further measure is the launch and the ongoing implementation of the Buhari Plan. This is a presidential initiative of the current Administration that seeks to provide immediate relief to the people of the north-east, offer psychosocial support to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and rehabilitate and resettle IDPs. It also seeks to support the restoration of livelihoods, generate jobs, secure communities, drive infrastructure development, facilitate peacebuilding, revamp agriculture, which is the lifeblood of the north-eastern region, and resuscitate health-care services. Indeed, the Buhari Plan is the blueprint for the comprehensive humanitarian relief and socioeconomic stabilization of the north-east, as well as the return and resettlement of displaced persons. It is designed to achieve the peace, stability, socioeconomic rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term sustainable economic development of the region.

Let me conclude by noting that sexual violence, whenever and wherever it occurs, is a crime and cannot be justified. Sexual violence in armed conflicts must be subject to absolute prohibition, as impunity for the crime has no place in the twenty-first century.



**Annex 45****Statement by the Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security of the Secretary-General of NATO, Clare Hutchinson**

I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to make a statement at this open debate on sexual violence in conflict.

The adoption of the women and peace and security resolutions, beginning with resolution 1325 (2000) 20 years ago, established a new path in protecting women and girls against sexual violence. The continued work of the Council, through the adoption of additional resolutions focused on protection from sexual violence in conflict, has made clear that preventing such violence and protecting women and girls, as well as men and boys, must be a priority.

There is now global recognition that conflict-related sexual violence threatens international peace and security. The awareness that sexual violence perpetuates conflict and instability is now entrenched in our collective thinking, as is the understanding of the long-term destructive nature of sexual violence as a deliberate tactic of war and the devastating effect that this has not only on women and girls, but on entire communities.

NATO understands that protection is at the core of the women and peace and security mandate. It has become central to our efforts to protect civilians in all our missions and operations. We recognize that understanding and responding to the grievous, systematic sexual abuse of women and girls in and around conflict are mission critical and essential to our operational effectiveness.

NATO has military guidelines, as well as a supplementary directive, to guide the Alliance's response to conflict-related sexual violence. These also affirm to commanders their leadership responsibility in preventing and responding to sexual violence. To ensure that we are prepared to carry out our responsibility, we continue to integrate the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence into our contingency planning, exercises, education and training.

Developing standards for ourselves is important, and how we encourage high standards in other militaries around the world is also essential. In many of our partner countries, we have strengthened our training on human rights and the protection of civilians, including against conflict-related sexual violence.

Earlier this year, NATO's Joint Forces Command Naples conducted a workshop focused on the Alliance's commitment to the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. We reaffirmed our international obligations to protecting women, girls, men and boys from sexual violence and highlighted the need to further develop clear political and operational guidance on how to respond to this heinous crime, including in relation to reporting.

While we have seen an increase in the recognition and understanding of conflict-related sexual violence and the risks it poses to peace and security, the scourge of sexual violence in and around conflict remains a pressing global protection challenge. Despite the definitions, resolutions, commitments, endorsements and financing dedicated to eradicating sexual violence, this intolerable crime continues in numerous conflicts around the globe today, where the bodies of so many women, men, girls and boys are co-opted as part of the battlefield. It demoralizes, destabilizes and destroys individuals, communities and societies across the world.

Where a culture of impunity exists, the many survivors of sexual violence in conflict may never see justice for what they have endured. Where such injustices go unpunished, they become part of the cycle of violence that perpetuates conflict. As

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the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg highlighted in his opening remarks at the NATO Digital Dialogue on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence last month,

“We need legal instruments to reveal the atrocities, hold the perpetrators accountable and bring justice to the victims. Impunity is not an option. And we also need military means, to defeat [those] that have sexual violence as an integral part of their strategy.”

Preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence is not just a moral duty, it is critical to achieving durable peace and security. Actions that NATO has taken have made a real difference, but we all have a responsibility to do even more.

That is why Secretary General Stoltenberg has highlighted the importance of reinforcing our policy framework to strengthen the political foundation for our continued commitment to eliminating sexual violence in conflict. This is an urgent task to create the conditions for security that will allow women and girls to live free from abuse and violence. And as with so many threats to peace and security, we can tackle this best by working together.

Ultimately, in tackling sexual violence against women and girls, we do more than help individual victims; we set the tone for the respect for fundamental dignities and human rights that is the foundation for freedom and essential for peace. By doing this we can lay a foundation for lasting stability — a foundation that we can all play a part in building.

**Annex 46****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Peru to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

We would like to thank Germany, in its capacity as President of the Security Council this month, and the Dominican Republic for convening this open debate on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence, under the women and peace and security agenda, to which Peru attaches great importance. We especially welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany. We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, for her important briefing, as well as the representatives of civil society for their briefings.

We welcome and celebrate, in particular, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was an essential milestone in the defence and advancement of the role of women in our societies, developing an agenda for women's empowerment and gender equality while envisioning a world in which women can exercise their freedoms and choices and realize their rights. We also celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), an important event for the women and peace and security agenda, which recognizes women as key players in building international peace and security.

For Peru, the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda is crucial. That is why, in recent years, we have made great efforts to improve the enjoyment and exercise of the rights of all women, adolescents and girls. Within this framework, Peru is committed to the women and peace and security agenda, which includes the key element of combating sexual violence in armed conflict. This commitment was expressed in the work we carried out during our recent participation in the Security Council within the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, which Peru had the honour of co-chairing with Germany.

We also wish to stress our support for multilateralism and the rule of law as essential elements of the international community. On this basis, we condemn in the strongest terms sexual assaults, including those committed during armed conflicts, whose systematic use, whether as a tactic of war, to spread terror or attack collective identities, must be understood and confronted as a threat to international peace and security.

We are concerned about the magnitude and seriousness of the problem. The most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/487) confirms the link between sexual violence, trafficking in persons and terrorism. It also reports alarming trends, such as sexual violence perpetrated against girls and boys, which cannot be justified under any circumstances and must be categorically rejected by the international community as a whole. In this regard, we wish to emphasize that the prohibition and condemnation of this type of violation during an armed conflict is established in international humanitarian law, international criminal law and international human rights law.

Actions aimed at combating these crimes must include not only the protection of victims and their rehabilitation, but also bringing those responsible to justice and addressing the root causes that make their perpetration possible, in order to prevent further repetition of these atrocities. We are convinced that the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, have a very important role to play in this task, and therefore urgent action must be taken.

Despite increased attention of the international community to the need to end impunity for crimes of sexual violence, and commitments to that end, we are concerned that accountability for such crimes remains elusive. In this regard, we consider it important to recall, in line with resolution 1820 (2008), that sexual crimes cannot be subject to amnesty in the context of conflict resolution processes.

It also is essential to recognize and combat gender inequality as a fundamental cause and driver of sexual violence in conflict. We therefore believe that equality and empowerment have a direct impact on the maintenance of peace and security.

The important role played by women in all areas of our societies is crucial. The coronavirus disease pandemic has demonstrated this, showing that 70 per cent of all health-care and social workers on the front line of the pandemic are women. However, inequalities and gaps are still evident. In that sense, the inclusion of women in the decision-making process is very important, as it gives visibility to their needs and perspectives and thereby also helps to eliminate stereotypes about women's roles. Evidence shows that greater participation of women in decision-making processes reduces the likelihood of conflict.

We cannot ignore the stigma and fear of victims or their intimidation by their attackers. Most cases of sexual violence go unreported. This is reflected in the low confidence and trust in national institutions. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of these institutions is essential to ensure accountability for the crimes committed and their prevention in the future.

The proper care for and rehabilitation of victims are essential to any sustainable peacebuilding process, including an understanding that their trauma is also psychological and that if it is not addressed through a multidimensional approach, it has the potential to destroy the social fabric of a community.

The Security Council must also continue to encourage, support and monitor specific commitments and plans to prevent sexual violence in the conflicts on its agenda, working with local non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities on the ground.

In conclusion, we wish to express our appreciation and support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and to underscore the priority that the Secretary-General attaches to this issue, in line with the need to build sustainable peace.

**Annex 47****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations**

We commend Germany and the Dominican Republic for convening this important debate and for their commitment in pursuing the important topic of sexual violence in conflict. We also thank the briefers for their remarks and would like to align ourselves with the statement by the European Union (see annex 25).

We are outraged by the persistent and widespread sexual violence in armed conflict committed by State and non-State actors, as documented in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/487). Sexual violence is increasingly used as a tactic of warfare and is a flagrant and unacceptable violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. One of the biggest challenges its victims are facing is the lack of accountability of the perpetrators for the crimes they have committed.

To address that, Poland will continue to fight and counteract gender-based violence, including as a response to the coronavirus pandemic. We will also continue to support a survivor-centred, rights-based response aimed at creating a safe and participatory environment, including through various solutions that build resilience and address the diverse experiences of all survivors. This approach is critical to ensuring that no one is left behind or excluded from the dividends of peace and development.

We recall that victims continue to be stigmatized and rejected by their families and communities too often. Wanting to escape stigma and discrimination, the majority of victims do not report rape and other forms of sexual violence. The great reluctance of many men and boys to report sexual violence makes it very difficult to accurately assess its scope, the limited statistics that exist almost certainly vastly underestimate the number of male victims. It not only contributes to the culture of impunity, but also prevents survivors of sexual violence from accessing medical care and legal support. Also, women with children born of sexual violence are the most marginalized and their lives are accompanied by stigma and isolation. Against this background, we commend the work done by civil society, human rights defenders and peacebuilders, who have been working to change this situation, notwithstanding the risks, and we promise to support them further.

We would also like to recall that sexual and gender-based violence remains an important part of humanitarian appeals and requires a joint international response and solidarity. Poverty and social exclusion remain risk factors associated with gender-based violence. As we have stated before, we believe that there is a need for a broader discussion in the Security Council on the importance of women's economic empowerment in post-conflict settings in more general terms.

We cannot spare any effort in combating sexual violence. Only by shedding light on the atrocities and by bringing perpetrators to justice can we lift the lasting shadow of sexual violence in conflict for all the survivors and prevent it from happening in the future.

**Annex 48****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations, Francisco Duarte Lopes**

My delegation aligns itself with the statements presented by the European Union (see annex 25) and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (see annex 20) and would like to complement them with the following points.

As we all know, conflict-related sexual violence disproportionately affects women and children and is, unfortunately, used as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism in order to fulfil military, economic and ideological objectives.

In this sense, we would like to recall that conflict-related sexual violence is not a mere consequence of war. Victims of conflict-related sexual violence can be subject to discrimination, sexual assault, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, human trafficking and forced marriages. These crimes represent serious violations and abuses of human rights and violations of humanitarian international law. Therefore, we must ensure accountability and fight against impunity, maintaining a zero-tolerance approach towards aggressors, whoever they might be.

In this regard, Portugal would like to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, for her work and efforts in strengthening the United Nations mechanisms to tackle conflict-related sexual violence as a peace and security issue.

Resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, recognized the impact of armed conflicts on women, highlighting the importance of promoting the active participation of women peacekeepers and of including women in negotiations, decisions and policymaking, as well as ceasefire processes. The women and peace and security agenda has since become an important component of peace processes. This year we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), an opportunity to increase our efforts to address structural gender inequalities, the role of women in peace processes and the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.

It is urgent to implement specific strategies against acts of violence, namely, through cooperation with civil society, youth and women's organizations, access to information and the use of new technologies. This commitment also includes the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights and providing victims with access to mental health care and to legal services.

Portugal has a holistic approach to the women and peace and security agenda, based on the promotion of gender equality, the inclusion of women in conflict prevention, the training of armed forces and the fight against gender and sexual violence.

My country has adopted its third national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2019-2020. This national action plan complies with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. In addition, Portugal is committed to greater legal and judicial cooperation on this matter, but also to expanding the presence and participation of women in military and security forces contingents. Every branch of the Portuguese Armed Forces has gender advisers.

To conclude, Portugal looks forward to the outcomes of this open debate, which represents an opportunity to strengthen our commitment to fight against the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators.

**Annex 49****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, Cho Hyun**

My delegation commends you, Mr. President, for convening this high-level open debate on conflict-related sexual violence for two consecutive years. The Republic of Korea offers its deep appreciation to the briefers for their valuable interventions today, and we take this opportunity to reiterate our full support for Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and her Office.

This year holds a special meaning for the women and peace and security agenda as we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). However, we are still witnessing a significant gap between commitments and implementation. Furthermore, the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis on the socioeconomic and security environment may pose even greater challenges to addressing sexual violence in armed conflict. As such, we must once again renew our commitments and pay heightened attention to this critical agenda. Against that troubling backdrop, while aligning myself with the statement submitted by the representative of Canada on behalf of 62 Member States (see annex 20), I would like to highlight the following five points on this important topic.

First, COVID-19 could aggravate the suffering of those who are exposed to sexual violence in armed conflict, and we must do our utmost to minimize its negative impacts. In that connection, we welcome the recent adoption of resolution 2532 (2020), and call for its full implementation, particularly the general and immediate cessation of hostilities and the durable humanitarian pause. Any military threat or attempt to incite violence must stop and political solutions must be pursued. Additionally, sexual violence must never be used as a tactic of war, terrorism or political repression, particularly in situations where people are suffering from the current health security crisis.

Secondly, we emphasize the importance of a survivor-centred approach. The landmark resolution 2467 (2019), which recognizes a survivor-centred approach in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, must be fully implemented. We should ensure survivors' non-discriminatory access to all the services that they need, such as sexual and reproductive health-care services and psychosocial care, so as to prioritize the rights and needs of victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, we must increase our efforts to prevent stigmatization, discrimination, hate speech and any form of revictimization to protect all survivors.

To that end, the Republic of Korea actively participates in the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence as one of its board members, and is also providing \$8 million in tailored assistance to survivors through the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration in 2019 and 2020. Addressing sexual violence in armed conflict carries a very special meaning for Korea. The Korean Government has been endeavouring to restore the honour and dignity of the so-called comfort women victims during the Second World War. We believe that it is crucial to ensure that lessons are learned from these victims' painful experiences.

Thirdly, we reiterate the pressing need for prevention. In that regard, my delegation would like to highlight the expanded role that United Nations peace operations can play. We encourage the increased participation of women in peace operations, more gender-sensitive mandates and enhanced training on gender-sensitivity for all United Nations peacekeeping and civilian personnel with a view



to preventing sexual violence and exploitation. We emphasize the importance of incorporating the latest technologies to support such efforts. In that regard, the Republic of Korea hopes that the 2021 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial meeting, to be held in Seoul next April, will serve as a timely platform to promote relevant discussions. For our part, the Korean Government continues to increase women's participation among our peacekeepers.

Fourthly, women must play a meaningful role in peacebuilding and decision-making processes. We should also endeavour to increase engagement with a wider range of actors and stakeholders, including civil society. Inclusivity is key to sustaining peace. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation must be ensured in the full continuum of peace processes, including peace negotiation, mediation and post-conflict reconstruction. Women's electoral rights must be upheld as well.

Last but not least, holding perpetrators of sexual violence to account is vital to delivering justice to victims and deterring future crimes. We must end impunity and safeguard judicial justice. To that end, we call for improving national, regional and international legal mechanisms for reporting and prosecuting sexual violence cases, putting perpetrators on trial and fully respecting international law, particularly international human rights law. We should not forget that sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide, as stipulated in resolution 1820 (2008).

The Republic of Korea reaffirms its driving commitment and strong support for the women and peace and security agenda and looks forward to hosting the second International Conference on Action with Women and Peace this year. As we now begin the third decade of the agenda, we will continue to stand with all victims and survivors and to work together in solidarity with the United Nations, as well as all Member States, to address the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence and ensure a survivor-centred approach.

**Annex 50****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Serbia to the United Nations, Milan Milanović**

I would like to thank Germany as President of the Security Council for organizing this high-level open debate, and I thank the Secretary-General for his report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487).

Serbia aligns itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (see annex 25), and I would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Serbia strongly supports the activities aimed at preventing all forms of violence, including sexual violence in armed conflicts. Regular consideration of this issue within the United Nations with the full cooperation of all relevant actors, such as States, international organizations and civil society, is a prerequisite for wider and more efficient and effective action.

The first steps in that direction were made with the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). It was followed by a number of other resolutions and Security Council presidential statements, including resolution 2106 (2013), on the basis of which the Secretary-General's reports on this issue are submitted every year. Serbia supports the efforts of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and other United Nations mechanisms, as evidenced by co-sponsoring, inter alia, General Assembly resolution 69/293 in 2015, by which 19 June was proclaimed the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Serbia also supported the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), once again joining the global efforts aimed at eliminating this grievous type of violence and at punishing those responsible for the crime. We commend the victim-focused approach and deem that the response to sexual violence in conflict should prioritize the rights and needs of victims.

However, achieving the common goal at the global level must be supported by appropriate measures at the national level. The measures should be twofold, focused on the establishment of an efficient system of prevention and on the punishment of perpetrators.

Serbia is a State party to the Rome Statute and supports the efforts of the International Criminal Court to prosecute crimes of sexual violence in conflict. It also fully cooperated with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in prosecuting crimes of sexual violence committed during conflicts in the territory of former Yugoslavia. The Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor and the Special Division of the Higher Court for War Crimes are the competent bodies addressing this issue at the national level.

Yet prevention measures are not always sufficient. It is therefore necessary to establish a system that ensures that perpetrators of sexual violence are brought to justice. However, victims are often not prepared to report incidents of sexual violence due primarily to stigmatization. The number of victims is therefore established subsequently by way of differing methodologies. Developing a uniform methodology to ascertain and document the number of victims of sexual violence, to be used by Governments, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, expert circles and individuals, would help to create a uniform approach to assessing the number of victims of sexual violence in conflict.

Encouraging victims of sexual violence to report the crime is the first step in detecting and punishing perpetrators and, consequently, in preventing the crime.

Serbia is advocating for the establishment of a system of prevention through the inclusion of the gender dimension in national security forces and international peacekeeping missions.

The protection of witnesses, in general, and the protection of aggrieved parties, in particular, are of paramount importance to the process of establishing responsibility and punishing the perpetrators. It should be borne in mind that, in the absence of written documents, the main source of evidence in proceedings such as these is eyewitness testimony. Serbia's experience in that regard indicates that, following the establishment of witness protection measures, victims of sexual violence in armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have been encouraged to testify. All along, the Victim and Witness Assistance and Support Service has been instrumental in encouraging and assisting the aggrieved parties.

The manipulation of numbers, however, does not contribute to the pursuit of justice, often leads to politicization, has a negative impact on the reconciliation process in post-conflict societies and, more often than not, brings no justice to, and does not indemnify, individual victims. Particularly problematic are attempts to establish a hierarchy of victims on an ethnic, religious, gender or some other basis. The number of victims of sexual violence in conflict diminishes neither the terrible effect of this type of violence on each individual victim nor the responsibility of States to punish the perpetrators and make it possible for victims to access justice.

Serbia's criminal justice protects victims of sexual violence by way of prosecuting two criminal offences: crimes against the civilian population and the organization of a group and incitement to the perpetration of genocide and war crimes. The Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor was also established, and it has processed multiple cases related to sexual violence in armed conflicts. Serbia has therefore ensured, institutionally and in practical terms, the highest level of processing of these crimes and the protection of victims of sexual violence. It is exceptionally important that this be done by all parties currently participating, or that previously participated, in armed conflicts, because it is never too late to bring perpetrators to justice and ensure proper punishment. This is exactly what is needed for the process of genuine reconciliation among one-time belligerents.

I would like to reaffirm Serbia's strong commitment and continued support to tackling the issue of sexual violence in conflicts.

**Annex 51****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations, Michal Mlynár**

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on organizing this important open debate and on bringing this topic back to the forefront of the discussions of the Security Council.

Under international humanitarian law, women and men, civilians and combatants alike, have equal protection. Nearly 20 years ago, resolution 1325 (2000) identified protection from gender-based violence as a key pillar for peace. Through the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), conflict-related sexual violence was declared a war crime and a crime against humanity.

Despite the ever-increasing international recognition of the serious impact that conflict and post-conflict sexual violence poses to international security and the maintenance of peace, concrete initiatives to prevent or mitigate these incidents are still not yielding the desired outcome. Similarly, steps to end impunity and dismantle the enabling environment allowing such violent acts to take place are falling short. It is concerning that, even with the adoption of resolutions, rulings in international criminal courts and existing international frameworks, there is still no robust approach to the elimination of sexual violence. It continues to be used as a tactic of war to terrorize populations, destroy the social fabric of communities and even amount to a business practice through trafficking and sex slavery.

Slovakia would like to emphasize the important role of the full and meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction activities. Their leadership and representation in decision-making processes at the national, regional and international levels are required in order to recognize and address gender-specific aspects of conflicts and mitigate their adverse impacts on the communities.

Furthermore, we stress that women are key pillars in peacebuilding for the effective and long-term sustainability of activities within communities, as well as in all activities for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Greater participation of women in peacekeeping missions is an area where we need to double our ongoing efforts. In order to achieve consistent and substantial results, it is necessary to also engage dedicated gender specialists in peacekeeping missions, including gender advisers and women protection advisers.

With the support of the Slovak chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2019, the OSCE Mediation Support Team and Gender Section launched a new toolkit focused on boosting the meaningful inclusion of women in peace processes. The toolkit assesses the state of women's participation in political and settlement processes throughout the OSCE space and makes recommendations to the OSCE Chair, secretariat and participating States. In addition, a photography exhibition dedicated to the women and peace agenda was displayed in Vienna in 2019 to increase awareness.

Last but not least, we must turn our attention to identifying the remedies not only for the symptoms but, more importantly, for the root causes of this issue. To understand the full effect of sexual violence in conflict situations, we must first understand the societal norms and practices that exist outside war. Research shows that inequalities between men and women increase the likelihood of rape in war.

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**Annex 52****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the United Nations**

We wish to thank the German presidency for organizing this debate and the invited speakers for their briefings and testimony. Slovenia aligns itself with the statements submitted on behalf of the European Union (see annex 25) and of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (see annex 20). We would like to make some additional remarks in our national capacity.

Slovenia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/487) and strongly condemns the persistent and widespread occurrence of sexual violence in conflict. In the past decades, we have achieved a critical paradigm shift whereby conflict-related sexual violence is no longer considered a side effect of conflict but is understood as a threat to international peace and security.

Sexual violence in conflict is a tactic of war and a means of repression, terror and control, used to humiliate and injure survivors, their families and entire communities. Survivors, not just women and girls but also men and boys, are traumatized and stigmatized for life. These hideous acts remain in the vivid recollection of whole communities for generations. A survivor-centred approach to sexual and gender-based violence is therefore central. Comprehensive support should be provided to the victims, including access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as psychosocial and socioeconomic assistance.

Impunity for conflict-related sexual violence has to end. We need to hold perpetrators accountable in order to provide justice to victims and to prevent these horrific crimes from happening in the future. It is the responsibility of States to investigate, prosecute and punish those who commit these crimes. However, ensuring accountability for conflict-related sexual violence committed by both non-State and State actors remains a major challenge.

International mechanisms for the investigation and prosecution of such crimes, including the International Criminal Court, play an important role in that regard. As a member of the international Justice Impact Group in The Hague, Slovenia supports the Hague Principles on Sexual Violence in order to enhance the understanding of what constitutes an act of sexual violence in conflict from the perspective of its survivors.

Impunity is not an option and should be exempt from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution and transitional justice processes, as highlighted by resolutions 1820 (2008) and 2106 (2013). Slovenia joins the call on the Security Council to fully integrate the issue of conflict-related sexual violence into the work of its sanctions committees by expanding the designated criteria to sexual violence in the context of armed conflict.

Slovenia continues to support the response of the International Committee of the Red Cross to sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for which we pledged €100,000 in 2019 for a period of three years. Furthermore, for the period of 2020-2022, we have earmarked €400,000 to support the implementation of two humanitarian projects, selected at the public tender for non-governmental organization proposals focusing on gender-based violence and raising awareness of child marriages in Lebanon.

This year, while we mark important milestones for gender equality and women's empowerment, we also face the biggest global crisis of the modern world. By revealing the structural inequalities, the coronavirus disease pandemic has demonstrated the devastating effects of undelivered promises and unachieved goals. However, at the same time it has demonstrated the central role and the power

of women's leadership. We have now been given an opportunity to rebuild more carefully, and it is our responsibility to seize it. Ending sexual and gender-based violence and impunity, as well as promoting equality and inclusion, must be building blocks in our efforts to build a better and more peaceful future for all.

**Annex 53****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations**

Sri Lanka warmly congratulates Germany on its assumption of the presidency for the month of July 2020 and is confident that it will be a successful tenure.

The year 2020 is pivotal for the women and peace and security agenda, particularly with the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on this subject, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As such, we believe that the convening of this important debate is timely.

Women play an important role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. Their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security are also essential. Therefore, Sri Lanka calls for an increase in the role of women in decision-making, not only in processes related to conflict prevention and resolution, but in all aspects related to governance at all points.

While recognizing that vital steps have been taken by the global community towards achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, it remains ominous that this segment of society is disproportionately and adversely affected by armed conflict and remains increasingly targeted. This situation has unfortunately been exacerbated by the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Having experienced an armed conflict borne out of a decades-long fight against terrorism, the Government of Sri Lanka fully recognizes the devastating, multilayered impact of conflict on women and girl children. They were and remain a vulnerable group of the population during the armed conflict and in the post-conflict context. The Government is fully committed to prioritizing the addressing their grievances, ensuring their protection and mitigating the continued harmful effects of the prolonged conflict, compounded by periodic natural disasters, through inclusive processes and proactive measures.

As we are deeply cognizant of their unique and differentiated needs and vulnerabilities, as well as the invaluable contribution of women to the social and economic development of the country, measures have been put in place for their empowerment by integrating gender-related priorities into Government plans and legal frameworks and gender-sensitive budgeting.

Universal adult franchise was introduced in Sri Lanka in 1931; free education for both boys and girls and free health care were introduced very early after the country's independence in 1948. These positive policies implemented over the years have resulted in achieving gender parity in education, with 68.5 per cent of university undergraduates being women. Furthermore, Sri Lanka adopted a Women's Charter two years before the Beijing Platform for Action and a national plan of action on women is in place.

We are of the firm resolve that preventing and addressing sexual violence is an integral part of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Sri Lanka maintains a zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse and exploitation and has adopted a number of best practices.

As a manifestation of this commitment, Sri Lanka also endorsed the Group of Eight Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict in January 2016, signed the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, contributed \$10,000 in August 2017 to the Trust Fund



in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and joined the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership.

Sri Lanka works with UN-Women on several projects related to the empowerment of women in Sri Lanka. With the support of the Government of Japan and UN-Women, in September 2019 the Government commenced the second phase of an ongoing programme for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, carried out by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and focusing on women's participation and empowerment in efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and in the drafting of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000).

A policy Framework and National Plan of Action to Address Sexual and Gender-based Violence has been adopted and is being implemented. This plan of action seeks to address the issue of sexual and gender-based violence against women through a three-pronged approach of prevention, intervention and policy advocacy.

Nationally, human rights, including provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, have been included into the training programmes of the security forces and the police, and a Directorate of Human Rights and Humanitarian Laws has been established for the security forces.

Sri Lanka recognizes that the inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions in civil, military and police functions allows women and children in the host country to feel more secure, particularly with reporting any abuse. With regard to peacekeeping missions, the country deployed its first woman peacekeeper in June 2017. Currently, there are 10 nursing and technical female officers with the level-2 hospital in South Sudan, and we stand ready to contribute more with the aim of helping to build a security sector that is accessible and responsive to all, especially women.

In addition, a vetting procedure has also been put in place in the selection of members of our armed forces and police to serve as peacekeeping troops. Predeployment training includes sensitizing both officers and troops on sexual harassment and abuse; the training manual of the Army and Air Force includes sensitizing and creating awareness of sexual exploitation and abuse and directives by the Integrated Training Services of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs have been incorporated into training schedules.

Safeguards that enable victims to make complaints and seek redress are key components in addressing sexual violence in Sri Lanka. As such, a hotline has been established for this purpose and legal aid centres throughout the island provide support to women victims. Six shelters have been established in the country by the Government to provide them with safety and protection. This is supplemented by shelters maintained by recognized women's organizations operating in Sri Lanka. Counselling is also extended through officers attached to each divisional secretariat. In addition, the female officers assigned to children and women's desks at every police station are given special training on counselling.

As the world endeavours to meet the multifaceted challenges of COVID-19 and grapples to get back on track to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sri Lanka reiterates its firm commitment to promoting and supporting the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and their equal and active participation and involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Sri Lanka strongly believes that the meaningful, enhanced participation of women in the international peace and security agenda will bring effective change and can play an important role in its long-term success.

**Annex 54****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations**

[Original: English and French]

Switzerland would like to thank Germany and the Dominican Republic for organizing this debate, as well as all the briefers for their contributions.

The current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis has far-reaching negative implications for the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. Switzerland therefore urges the Security Council and the international community to immediately implement resolution 2532 (2020). We support the call of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict on all parties to conflict to cease all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. We welcome the Secretary-General's recent report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487) and reiterate the primary responsibility of Member States to protect all women and girls, as well as men and boys, against acts of sexual violence.

Let me highlight three issues.

First, conflict-related sexual violence is deeply rooted in gender inequality and gender-based discrimination. Hence, it constitutes both an early warning sign and consequence of conflict. It is therefore crucial to empower women and girls, as well as to engage men and boys, in order to achieve gender equality. While the majority of survivors of sexual violence are women and girls, men and boys also suffer from such horrible acts of violence. The stigmatization and exclusion of victims can lead to an even higher number of such acts going unreported. The contribution of civil society, including women human rights defenders, in creating mutual trust and respect remains key to preventing and resolving conflicts.

Secondly, Switzerland advocates for a community-based approach in treating survivors of sexual violence, including children born of rape. The rights and needs of survivors, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, must be at the centre of every response. Survivors must be treated with dignity and respect. We emphasize the importance of reintegrating survivors into their communities and related social structures. That is why Switzerland supports projects that strengthen solidarity networks and collective healing as conflict-related sexual violence affects a community as a whole.

Thirdly, Switzerland is concerned about the persisting gaps related to accountability and justice for conflict-related sexual violence at national and international levels. While supporting the crucial efforts of the International Criminal Court and its Prosecutor to hold perpetrators accountable for sexual and gender-based crimes, Switzerland also engages with national actors to facilitate access to justice for survivors. Such partnerships empower survivors to become key stakeholders and agents of change in efforts to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. In line with resolution 2467 (2019), Switzerland reiterates the need for a holistic approach, including legal and non-legal measures, and calls on the Council to continue to fight impunity and uphold accountability with all means at its disposal.

This year, we commemorate important milestones, such as the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. Decisive progress in eliminating the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence is long overdue. The Security Council has a crucial role to play, in

particular with regard to strengthening and monitoring the full implementation of commitments by all parties to conflict to prevent and address all forms of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. We therefore urge the Council to continue its efforts in this sense.

**Annex 55****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari**

[Original: English and Arabic]

My delegation takes note of the concept note addressed to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations on this topic.

The Syrian Arab Republic affirms its support for all efforts aimed at combating the phenomenon of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and the importance of holding the instigators and perpetrators accountable, and calls for extreme caution and objectivity in dealing with this serious humanitarian issue without the politicization that extends the suffering of the victims and hinders its elimination through international efforts.

Allow me to refer to the efforts made by the Syrian Government to strengthen the national framework, including the legal framework, to protect women and ensure their rights and empowerment. For example, Syrian national legislation criminalizes many acts, such as so-called honour crimes, some types of cybercrime and other acts of violence against women. There are also competent courts that are responsible for holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable in accordance with procedural rules that ensure proper enforcement, and there are national plans and programmes to deal with women victims of violence and provide them with the support they need.

With regard to women with disabilities, the national legislative framework and plans include providing protection for them, promoting their advancement, ensuring the full enjoyment of their rights and achieving their full integration into society in a manner commensurate with the obligations of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We would also like to mention that Syrian legislation imposes severe criminal penalties for perpetrators of sexual assault crimes, in accordance with the Syrian Penal Code promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 148 of 1949 and its subsequent amendments.

Moreover, we note that it is an obligation of the Syrian Arab Republic to advance, protect and promote the status and rights of women, together with their empowerment. In this context, several amendments to Syrian laws were made, the most recent of which are the amendments to the provisions of the Personal Status Law (Law 4 of 2019), which establishes the minimum age for marriage; and Law No. 2 of 2020, which cancels article 548 of the Penal Code, therefore, cancelling the pardonable or mitigating excuse relevant to honour crimes. Furthermore, a national interpretation of resolution 1325 (2000) is being prepared in the form of a draft programmatic plan on the content of the resolution. A study is also under way with a view to identifying discriminatory laws in Syria to ensure their compatibility with the Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, which guarantees that women enjoy full citizenship rights, equality and no discrimination in any fields.

The reports of the Secretary-General continue to refuse to acknowledge that terrorism is the root cause of the long-suffering of Syrian women. They also refuse to indicate the huge challenges that prolong and deepen such suffering. The policies of aggression and occupation targeting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, the unilateral coercive measures imposed on it by several international parties and the politicization that has stigmatized the humanitarian aspect in the Syrian Arab Republic are all challenges that have changed the lifestyle of many Syrian women and led them to experience displacement to escape terrorist armed groups or exposure to the nascent practices of these groups and their extremist beliefs, depriving them of fundamental rights.

Furthermore, the Syrian Arab Republic categorically rejects the use by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict of the phrase “parties to the conflict” in her reports, thereby putting the legal and legitimate Government of the Syrian Arab Republic — which is upholding its constitutional duty to protect its people and ensure the safety and territorial integrity of its lands from the danger of terrorism, in accordance with the provisions of international law — on an equal footing with terrorist armed groups created, financed, armed and supported by countries that have employed terrorism as a tool for their war on Syria. In addition, the Syrian Arab Republic regrets the biased approach of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict towards the situation in my country.

Accordingly, we consider the analysis of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to be flawed on the factual and legal levels and that it does not reflect her intended mandate, which requires an objective approach to the reality of the issue.

The Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict continues to ignore the hundreds of identical letters of the Syrian Government addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, which document the crimes and massacres committed by terrorist armed groups and the so-called Global Coalition to Counter Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which has had a profound impact on women and compelled them to live in harsh conditions, physical and psychological, including exposure to various forms of violence. On the contrary, the Office of the Special Representative continues to adopt the contents of the reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and to promote the content of these reports.

In this regard, we reiterate our rejection of the special and periodic reports and recommendations of the so-called International Commission of Inquiry, owing to the fact that the Commission has repeatedly proved to be a politicized tool that lacks the minimum objective and professional criteria. Since its establishment, the Commission has been a prisoner of the political inclinations of countries that have engaged in hostile acts against my country, either directly or indirectly, thus becoming an example of how United Nations mechanisms are used to twist facts and manipulate legal concepts.

Moreover, this deliberate disregard only covers up the practices of terrorist organizations and the individuals and entities associated with them, whose crimes and grave violations have affected tens of thousands of women and children in Syria and Iraq. In this context, my delegation emphasizes the credibility and relevance of what we have repeatedly conveyed in many letters and statements on various occasions, meetings and platforms, by stressing the need to uncover the practices of terrorist organizations, and for the United Nations to play an effective role in coordinating international efforts to support the Syrian Government and its allies in the fight against terrorism.

**Annex 56****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations**

We would like to thank the German presidency of the Security Council for convening this important debate and express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2020/487). We commend the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Patten, and the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on the impact and role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, and of resolution 1820 (2008), which classified the use of conflict-related sexual violence as an impediment to the restoration of international peace and security, we have witnessed important achievements in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence.

Over the past decade, there have been examples of successful prosecutions of perpetrators by national and international tribunals, legislative reforms to enhance protection and ensure access to justice for survivors, and codes of conduct for security forces on conflict-related sexual violence. Most importantly, a global mindset that firmly renounces this crime and supports efforts aimed at its elimination has been formed.

Despite important progress on policy and implementation, however, the Secretary-General's most recent report to the Council reveals that we face an increasingly complex global security environment in which sexual violence remains a cruel tactic of war, torture, terror and political repression and a brutal tool of displacement and dehumanization. An integrated and comprehensive approach, comprising an emphasis on prevention, holding perpetrators accountable and supporting survivors, is needed in order to effectively address sexual violence in conflict.

First, we need to tackle the structural root causes that drive and perpetuate this violence, including gender inequality, which is exacerbated by conflict. Achieving gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the full recognition of their human rights are the essential steps for prevention and addressing impunity. This will also help further our agenda on women and peace and security.

Ending violence against women is a part of this effort. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, stands out as a landmark document in this regard. Turkey is committed to fostering the objectives of the Convention and stands ready to share its experiences in its implementation.

Secondly, we need to make sure that perpetrators of such heinous crimes are held accountable. Impunity must be put to an end both for perpetrators and those in the chain of command. Accountability is essential in terms of both a response and prevention. Ending impunity is a key deterrent to future violence of this nature, and it is a vital step in helping survivors to repair and rebuild their lives.

This brings us to the third point, which is to provide survivors with both protection and legal action. Life-saving services, including medical care, psychological support and legal aid, should be made more available and accessible. To that end, the primary role of States should be strengthened and complemented by assistance from relevant United Nations entities, specialized agencies and peacekeeping missions.

As the conflict in Syria enters its tenth year, millions of Syrians, particularly women and girls, continue to live under the threat of sexual violence. The horrific

acts of sexual violence perpetrated by the Syrian regime, especially during arrest and detention and at checkpoints, have been documented in various United Nations reports.

As a neighbouring country, which has opened its doors to Syrians fleeing war and violence in their own country, Turkey now hosts close to 4 million Syrians, of whom approximately 1.7 million are women. Turkey makes every effort to provide security and safety to Syrian women and girls who have fled the conflict in Syria. We attach utmost importance to their empowerment and self-reliance without any threat of sexual and gender-based violence.

Since 2014, psychological and social support has been provided to a large number of refugees to ensure their adaptation to our country and access to services. In addition to benefiting from the same health-care services provided to Turkish citizens, necessary legal steps are taken in order to protect refugee women who are victims of violence. All women seeking asylum in Turkey who are identified as victims of violence have the right to stay in women's shelters. They also receive assistance from violence prevention and monitoring centres.

People of Iraq from different ethnic and religious backgrounds — including Shias, Sunnis, Yazidis, Turkmen, Kurds, Arabs and Christians — faced the most evil practices of conflict-related sexual violence during the invasion by the Da'esh terrorist organization. It is also worth noting that a significant number of Yazidis who fled to northern Iraq because of Da'esh atrocities still cannot return to their homeland in Sinjar owing to the oppressive policies and practices of the terrorist organization Kurdistan Workers Party.

Given the fact that accountability is one of the key factors in preventing conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, we support the Secretary-General's call on Iraqi authorities to prosecute the Da'esh affiliates for crimes related to sexual violence. We are ready to assist the Iraqi Government in addressing the needs of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

We note the efforts and the difficulties in monitoring and reporting cases of conflict-related sexual violence in Libya. We are also compelled to underline that, in its current form, the Libya section of the report is far from complete without reflecting the conflict-related sexual violence by Haftar's militia. The flagrant violations of international humanitarian law by Haftar's militia have once again become evident by the mass graves discovered in Tarhunah, as well as the improvised explosive devices and mines trapped to kill innocent civilians in Tripoli and other areas. The conflict-related sexual violence by Haftar's militia also deserves further attention.

Furthermore, we would like to recall that the military offensive on Tripoli mentioned in the report was launched against the United Nations-recognized Government of National Accord, Libya's sole internationally recognized, legitimate Government, by rebels, insurgents and mercenaries affiliated with warlord Haftar.

The findings of the Secretary-General's report on the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar are once again distressing. The report not only reminds us of the widespread and systematic brutal attacks, including sexual violence perpetrated against the Rohingya community, especially in 2017, but also indicates the ongoing vulnerability of displaced Rohingya women and girls who are exposed to high risks of trafficking-related sexual violence, as well as detention and forced labour in camps.

We expect the joint communiqué to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence, signed in 2018 by the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations, to be fully implemented. It is also of great importance that the Government of Myanmar



address the root causes of the problem in Rakhine state and create the necessary conditions for peaceful coexistence and a safe return of refugees. We welcome the provisional measures announced on 23 January 2020 by the International Court of Justice and expect full compliance with them.

Turkey will continue to support Myanmar as it makes further progress to end human rights violations, including sexual violence.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Turkey's strong commitment and continued support to international, regional and national efforts to prevent and respond to the consequences of sexual violence in conflict.

**Annex 57****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations, Sergiy Kyslytsya**

Let me express my appreciation to the German presidency for holding this open debate on women and peace and security, focused on sexual violence in conflict. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten and the representatives of civil society for their presentations.

Ukraine reiterates its full support for the mandate and work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We reaffirm our commitment to the zero-tolerance policy regarding all forms of sexual violence and stand in solidarity with victims and survivors of such crimes.

It is worth mentioning that Ukraine aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (see annex 25).

This year provides a fitting opportunity to assess the effectiveness of two decades of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

As an elected member of the Security Council, Ukraine co-sponsored the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) in 2000, reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction.

Unfortunately, in recent years the global security environment has only worsened, and this year it was further undermined by the coronavirus disease pandemic. After years of joint efforts, the international community has not tackled the main drivers of this violence.

The reality of sexual violence against women and men and girls and boys continues to constitute a part of each and every armed conflict around the globe. Sexual violence has become a part of warfare tactics, torture, terrorism, interrogations, repressions and even control of some territories. We are particularly concerned that sexual violence and related human trafficking could be used by terrorist groups to generate revenue and lead to abductions of human beings, especially women and girls, for sale.

The report (S/2020/487) before us clearly indicates that focusing on 19 countries only points out the difficulties related to the underreporting of incidents resulting from the intimidation and stigmatization of survivors, as well as the limited capacities of United Nations staff.

At the same time, it is imperative to follow up on General Assembly resolutions that include provisions directly dedicated to the situation of human rights in conflicts and in the occupied territories. We expect that future Secretary-General reports on the topic will be more comprehensive and reflect situations in major conflict-affected zones. In this connection, we fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation to continue to include sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for sanctions and targeted measures.

Since the establishment of the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, more than 10 years ago, the Security Council has adopted a number of resolutions focused, first and foremost, on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. Nevertheless, the list of perpetrators presented in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General has remained almost unchanged for years. This is a result of poor compliance with relevant obligations and commitments not only by non-State actors, but also by States.

We cannot tolerate such behaviour and should send a clear message to those who commit these grave violations under international law that statements about the inevitability of accountability and justice will not remain merely solemn declarations, but will be translated into concrete, immediate actions. Perpetrators of sexual violence must, regardless of their affiliation or rank, be held to account.

It is therefore imperative that the international community, and the Security Council in particular, continue to look for the most effective ways to enhance the implementation of the existing resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda in order to tackle and to prevent atrocities from being committed.

In that light, Ukraine, as the country that pioneered the issue of prevention and initiated the relevant process in the Human Rights Council, fully supports the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding the strengthening of prevention efforts by demanding that all State and non-State actors make formal commitments to including the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in security sector reform. Nonetheless, the path towards the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence lies in the genuine empowerment of women, ensuring gender equality in all spheres of life.

Ukraine attaches great importance to the equal and full participation of women in all activities in areas of national security, conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

With the aim of implementing the women and peace and security agenda at the national level, Ukraine, while facing foreign military aggression, was among the first countries to adopt a comprehensive national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) for 2016-2020. The national action plan is aimed, inter alia, at achieving the greater participation of women in decision-making, in particular in the areas of national security and defence and peacemaking, and at ensuring the protection of all victims of violence, including the prevention of and response to conflicts and gender-based violence.

The plan also includes a recommendation on the national strategy for the prevention and response to the conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine, in particular relating to education and training programmes for the security sector on aspects of prevention, protection and response, along with psychological assistance and rehabilitation programmes for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, as well as an information campaign on the prevention of sexual violence.

The active integration of gender equality into the activities of the armed forces of Ukraine fostered changes to the list of military specialties and positions open to women candidates. Currently, the Government of Ukraine, in cooperation with international and non-governmental organizations, is developing a new national action plan for the period 2021-2025, which is expected to be adopted by the end of this year. The Government of Ukraine has enhanced its efforts to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres of public life, as well as the necessary support for, and reintegration of, women victims who have suffered sexual violence as the result of the ongoing foreign aggression.

In the light of that I have mentioned, I must once again reiterate our regret at the omission of a reference to the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict and its victims in the Secretary-General's latest thematic report.

In conclusion, I would like to report that, in May, Ukraine joined the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and will continue its efforts aimed at promoting awareness of the women and peace and security agenda and strengthening its implementation within the United Nations, in particular advancing women's rights and protecting them from sexual and gender-based violence.

**Annex 58****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, Lana Nusseibeh**

I would like to thank Minister Maas and Germany for convening this meeting. I also thank Special Representative Pramila Patten and Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Angelina Jolie for highlighting many important points today.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Despite some progress, sexual violence, including rape, continues to be widely used as a tactic of war in conflict situations, with devastating consequences both for individuals and their families and for the broader sustainability of peace and economic recovery. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has also exacerbated sexual and gender-based violence, which underlines the need for the international community to increase its efforts to combat conflict-related sexual violence in its response to the pandemic. My country has supported the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which would reduce conflict-related sexual violence and enable the delivery of services for victims.

Our region is still recovering from the horrors of Da'esh and the aftermath of the pain and suffering inflicted upon the people of Syria and Iraq. We must not forget the women and children who were forced into sexual slavery and tortured at the hands of terrorists and extremists. It is unacceptable that to this day the perpetrators have not been brought to justice to answer for their crimes. As Member States, we have a responsibility to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence are held accountable and are brought to justice.

Last year, the Council adopted resolution 2467 (2019), which strengthens justice and accountability and calls for a survivor-centred approach to the prevention of, and response to, conflict-related sexual violence. I would like to take this opportunity to share the efforts of the United Arab Emirates towards this outcome.

The United Arab Emirates has recognized the plight of Yazidi women and has worked with Nadia's initiative to ensure that the community of Sinjar recovers from conflict-related sexual violence. The Secretary-General's report (S/2020/487) confirms that more than 1,000 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were predominantly against Yazidi women and girls. Nadia's initiative is a true advocate for survivors of genocide and sexual violence, and its programmes are community-driven and survivor-centric. The United Arab Emirates has funded reconstruction efforts and donated over \$2 million to provide comprehensive potable water, sanitation and hygiene projects for more than 60,000 Yazidis living in six villages in Sinjar. It is vital that survivors of sexual violence have a chance to start afresh in their homeland.

Last year, the United Arab Emirates also co-hosted the Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises conference with Norway, the United Nations and other partners, including a \$10 million pledge to fund a range of anti-sexual and gender-based violence entities. Similarly, we made one of the largest-ever humanitarian contributions, of \$25 million, to the United Nations Population Fund in 2019, allowing the agency to continue its work on behalf of women in conflict-afflicted communities. The United Arab Emirates has also earmarked its financial contribution to the United Nations Investigative Team to promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to enhance the work of the team with respect to the investigation of sexual and gender-based crimes.

Earlier this year, the second cohort of the United Arab Emirates and UN-Women joint women, peace and security programme successfully completed its military and peacekeeping training. The new cohort of graduates included 223 women from 11 countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The programme has managed to build the capacity of women in our region and beyond. The meaningful participation of women in the security sector actively protects against and prevents conflict-related sexual violence and creates an empowering environment for women around the world.

As part of our panel series with the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, we will host a high-level panel examining women's access to justice in post-conflict reconstruction in New York on 23 July. The panel will include an in-depth discussion on improving the implementation of gender-sensitive legislation and address cultural and structural barriers to women's access to justice.

Furthermore, the United Arab Emirates takes note of the Secretary-General's recommendations on conflict-related sexual violence, and we would like to highlight the following priorities.

First, noting the rise in sexual and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, we call on fellow Member States to continue to financially and politically support the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to enable it to continue with its critical work of ensuring accountability for sexual violence crimes.

Secondly, in order to strengthen prevention in the context of security sector reform, we must support affected countries financially and with technical expertise to enhance their response to conflict-related sexual violence. We must also increase the representation of women in national police services, considering in particular the positive correlation between the percentage of female officers and the reporting rates for sexual violence-related crimes.

Thirdly, we need to ensure that all our efforts to document and investigate sexual violence are survivor-centred and well-coordinated and that they adhere to the principles of safety, confidentiality, informed consent, independence and impartiality.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the United Arab Emirates to addressing sexual violence in conflict situations. We must work together to enhance compliance measures and dismantle structural barriers in order to achieve more for survivors and those at risk of sexual and gender-based violence, especially during these challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Annex 59****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Uruguay thanks Germany and the Dominican Republic for convening this timely open debate and aligns itself with the statement submitted by Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security (see annex 20).

Sexual violence in conflict is one of the most serious and degrading violations of human dignity. That form of violence inflicts unspeakable suffering on the victims and causes long-lasting trauma that ruthlessly destroys the social fabric of entire communities, threatening their recovery and development prospects.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2020/487) shows that sexual violence in conflict unfortunately continues to be used as a tactic of war and terrorism. Meanwhile, the global crisis of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which is devastating the planet, is further exacerbating sexual and gender-based violence. It is therefore essential to move from commitment to compliance and to find solutions to end that grave scourge.

First, Uruguay believes that the most effective tool to achieve that objective is prevention. There is no doubt that peace continues to be the best way to combat sexual violence in conflict. According to the Secretary-General's report, the ultimate goal of the agenda against that kind of violence is not a war without violations but a world without wars. The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, which was supported a few days ago by resolution 2532 (2020), is a step in that direction.

Another key factor in prevention is establishing an environment that respects women's rights, allowing them to participate on an equal footing in political, economic and social life and to fully contribute to the growth of their societies. The common denominator of sexual violence is that it finds fertile ground where there are well-established patterns of structural gender discrimination. States therefore need to address those underlying causes, which perpetuate violence, and promote the full realization of human rights.

Uruguay believes that this task requires a sustained effort, both in conflict situations and in times of peace. In that regard, the Uruguayan Government has continued to strengthen its legal system and has adopted new laws, including on combating human trafficking and eradicating violence against women and other human rights violations, as well as on the care and reparation of victims.

For Uruguay, education, apart being a right in itself, plays a fundamental role in promoting other women's rights. Education provides women and girls with opportunities for their economic, political and social empowerment, and equips them with better tools for overcoming discrimination and violence. The increasing number of attacks on schools and universities in different conflict situations is regrettable. States that have not done so are therefore encouraged to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

Secondly, Governments must adopt effective mechanisms to address the recovery and reintegration of victims through services and programmes that are not only limited to health care, but also provide psychosocial care to survivors so that they can overcome trauma and stigmatization, and empower them to successfully reintegrate into society. As recognized in resolution 2467 (2019), the focus should be on the victims. They are not a homogeneous group. It is therefore necessary to address the specific needs of different groups, such as women and girls, men and

boys who have been victims of sexual violence, people with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, ethnic minorities and stigmatized and marginalized communities, as well as children born of war. Continuing such services must remain a priority during the current global health crisis, in which the risks of sexual and gender-based violence are increasing.

Thirdly, accountability is essential to combating impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, deterring and preventing such crimes and providing redress to victims. COVID-19 has had a negative impact on accountability, limiting the ability of States to receive complaints and conduct investigations and trials. Delivering justice is one of the most important duties of States. Efforts must be made to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice in these exceptional times. That can be achieved through the innovative solutions that some States have already begun to implement, such as the use of tele-hearings with due guarantees of legality and transparency, the application of remote justice through electronic files, digital signatures of judges and parties and the use of in-person justice, respecting distances.

In order to deliver justice, Uruguay has reopened its court offices with in-person hearings. Measures were introduced to mitigate health risks and ensure social distancing in court buildings, such as more spaced out scheduling, virtual procedures to reduce the flow of people in offices and summoning witnesses to trials for shorter periods and sequentially.

When the national legal system fails, international law should apply. The Rome Statute includes sexual violence in the category of crimes against humanity and war crimes and recognizes the possibility that it may amount to the crime of genocide. Crimes of that magnitude should not go unpunished. Uruguay therefore encourages the Security Council to refer such cases to the International Criminal Court.

Fourthly, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for preventing and combating sexual violence in conflict. Consequently, it must ensure that the issue is duly considered in the sanctions committees, which should systematically include the names of perpetrators in their listings. The prevention of sexual violence should also be included in country-specific resolutions and in the mandates of peace operations, and gender advisers should be deployed on the ground. Uruguay is committed to cooperating as far as possible with the Security Council to ensure the proper functioning of peacekeeping operations. It therefore provides predeployment training to its troops on protection issues and on the detection of early warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence. It has also increased women's participation in its contingents, which have excelled in preventing and responding to sexual violence and human rights violations.

Finally, Uruguay would like to highlight the important role of an actor that has been closely linked to the origin and development of the women and peace and security agenda and without which implementation will not be possible — civil society. At a time when COVID-19 is affecting the already restricted space for action by women human rights defenders and peacebuilders, they often continue to be victims of crimes against them. A gender component is clearly identified in a significant number of attacks against them, resulting in threats and attacks, including rape and sexual violence. The authorities have an obligation to prevent such attacks, effectively investigate complaints, punish the perpetrators and refrain from imposing excessive restrictions that hinder the work of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders. Creating an adequate environment for their work, implementing special mechanisms and protocols for protection and the prevention of crimes against them, and establishing specialized offices and personnel to investigate and process complaints are measures that States can adopt to legitimize the work they do.



At a time when human rights are being constrained, the work of those activists is more necessary than ever in order to implement public health measures. Uruguay would therefore like to conclude by acknowledging the selfless work that they do with courage and dedication in the most difficult and risky environments, devoting their lives to building a more equitable foundation for the future and defending victims of sexual violence and the rights of the most oppressed and vulnerable in the world.

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