



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9016th meeting

Wednesday, 13 April 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Lord Ahmad/Mr. Kariuki	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. Parga Cintra
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Gabon	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Mr. Flynn
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Accountability as prevention

Ending cycles of sexual violence in conflict

Letter dated 5 April 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/293)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Accountability as prevention

Ending cycles of sexual violence in conflict

Letter dated 5 April 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/293)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Morocco, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Ms. Nadia Murad, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Goodwill Ambassador; Ms. Mariana Karkoutly, co-founder of Huquqyat; and Ms. Hilina Berhanu, civil society brifer.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, and Mr. Michal Miarka, Head of the NATO Liaison Office to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in that regard.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/272, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, and document S/2022/293, which contains the text of a letter dated 5 April 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Ms. Patten.

Ms. Patten: I would like to begin my remarks today with a question that should be on the mind of every member of the Council: What do the 10 resolutions on women and peace and security — five of which are squarely on preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence — mean right now for a woman in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Myanmar or Tigray?

Every new wave of warfare brings with it a rising tide of human tragedy, including new waves of war's oldest, most silenced and least condemned crime, and yet the promise expressed by the Council in its resolutions is prevention. They represent a commitment to bringing all tools to bear to break the seemingly endless cycles of sexual violence, impunity and revenge in order to save succeeding generations from that scourge. They articulate the elements of an accountability regime to influence the conduct of perpetrators and potential perpetrators.

In that respect, I would like to sincerely appreciate the leadership of the United Kingdom in convening this debate on accountability as prevention. I thank Lord Ahmad and the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative for shining and sustaining a spotlight on that atrocity during dark and difficult times. I warmly welcome the civil society briefers from Syria and Ethiopia, as well as Iraqi Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ms. Nadia Murad. The lived experience of survivors and directly affected communities must guide our global search for solutions.

We meet at a time of great global turbulence, marked by multiple cascading crises. When the pandemic emptied this Chamber over two years ago, the Secretary-General called for a global ceasefire in order to defeat the common enemy of disease. The pandemic

was meant to usher in a paradigm shift — to silence the guns and amplify the voices of women, caregivers and peacebuilders; to deepen investment in public welfare, rather than the instruments of warfare. Instead, we have seen increased militarization, including an epidemic of coups that have turned back the clock on women's rights.

New crises have multiplied even as entrenched wars march on, exacerbating the challenge of shrinking — in some cases, closing — of public space, manifest in rising reprisals against women human-rights defenders, activists and journalists, who risk their lives to bring these issues to the attention of the world. Reprisals have been used against front-line actors working to end sexual violence and deliver life-saving services; and sexual violence itself has been used as a tool of reprisals and intimidation, coupled with misogynistic hate speech, including online. That affects the wider political climate, when those who should be praised for their courage are, instead, persecuted.

In virtual meetings over many months on many screens, we endeavoured to ensure that survivors on war-time rape would not be forgotten in the long shadow cast by the coronavirus disease. Today, as the world watches, transfixed by the horrors unfolding in Ukraine, with its wider ripple effects on global stability, other crises continue to escalate behind the scenes. The bandwidth of our global attention economy is limited. As the Secretary-General has rightly stated, the world is too small for so many hotspots. We must reassure all populations at risk that they are not forgotten and that international law is not an empty promise.

In my public statements on Ukraine, I have urged all parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of women and girls from sexual violence, trafficking and exploitation, including those displaced internally and across borders, following the fastest population flight this century. I have expressed grave concern about the mounting allegation of sexual violence and called for swift and rigorous investigations in order to ensure accountability as a central aspect of deterrence, prevention and non-repetition. The failure to acknowledge and investigate past atrocities is the surest sign that violations will continue unabated.

All the warning signs are flashing red and yet, essential civilian infrastructure has been reduced to rubble and ruin. Gender-based violence and reproductive health services are least available just when they are

needed most. We do not need hard data for a scaled-up humanitarian response. We do not need hard data for all parties to ensure zero-tolerance for sexual violence. The harrowing personal testimonies and pictures seen around the world, including of rape at gunpoint and rape in front of family members, are a call to action.

The report before us today (S/2022/272) exposes painful human stories — all of which cry out for justice and redress.

In northern Ethiopia, a young woman was taken to an Eritrean Defence Forces camp where 27 soldiers raped her, as a result of which she contracted HIV. An elderly visually impaired woman was shot by soldiers after being detained for three days while her daughter was raped by members of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces in an adjacent room. An adolescent boy was raped in Himora. He later committed suicide.

There is also the case of a woman and two girls, whose discarded bodies were found days after their kidnapping and rape by armed elements in the Central African Republic, where sexual violence has doubled over the past year, particularly against displaced populations, who are at risk of being forgotten victims of a forgotten war.

Likewise, the plight of more than 900,000 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, has become a crisis within a crisis following the military takeover of Myanmar by the Tatmadaw. This year's report includes the tragic case of two women subjected to gang rape by Tatmadaw soldiers in Chin state, resulting in unwanted pregnancies in both cases.

There is also the case of a woman allegedly raped at gunpoint by an officer of the Puntland Police Force in Somalia — a context where abduction, rape and forced marriage are rampant, while legislative reform to address those crimes has been stalled since 2018.

In Colombia, cases of sexual violence committed against women ex-combatants and members of their families were also documented.

In Afghanistan, professional women, including in the security sector, have been targeted for their work to address sexual violence, with a female police officer who was eight-months pregnant brutally tortured and killed in Ghor province.

Thousands of civilians abducted by Da'esh in Iraq and Syria between 2014 and 2017 remain in captivity, including victims of forced marriage and sexual slavery.

In Yemen, harmful social norms, exacerbated by seven years of armed conflict, can result in a victim being killed for reporting rape, which persists in detention facilities and displacement settings.

In each of those contexts, we see the emboldening effects of impunity. Indeed, the gap between commitments and compliance, resolutions and reality, is evident on every page of the annual report. Over the past year, sexual violence continued to be committed as a tactic of war, torture, terrorism and political repression. The report covers 18 country situations and documents 3,293 United Nations-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence committed in 2021, representing a significant increase of some 800 cases, compared with 2020. Once again, the highest number of incidents was recorded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with 1,016 cases. The vast majority of incidents — 97 per cent — targeted women and girls. There were also 83 cases recorded against men and boys, with the majority occurring in detention settings, and 12 verified cases targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex individuals.

The report demonstrates how intersecting forms of inequality, based on ethnic identity, political affiliation, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, income and migratory status increase the risks faced by diverse individuals, in a context of historical power imbalances, which are structural and systemic. While the report conveys the severity of verified incidents, no report can capture the full scale and prevalence of this chronically underreported, historically hidden crime.

Indeed, survivors continue to be silenced by trauma, pain and despair, as well as by stigma, insecurity and the paucity of service provision. There is a relationship between the individual silence and the official silence: survivors cannot be expected to denounce what the State itself denies. When perpetrators walk free, the survivors walk in fear, carrying the burden of ostracism and shame.

The central insight of this year's report is the need to foster a protective environment that inhibits sexual violence in the first instance and enables safe reporting and response. Those are not isolated incidents. They do not occur in a vacuum. Today, we know more than ever before about the security dynamics that

cause such crimes to occur and reoccur, namely, mass population, displacement, the collapse of the rule of law, decimated infrastructure and institutions, rising violent extremism and hostilities waged in proximity to civilian population centres.

It is also starkly evident across the world that lawlessness and impunity are tantamount to license to rape. We are aware of the visible drivers, such as arms proliferation, and the invisible drivers, such as gender-based discrimination. We know the context in which sexual violence is concentrated, namely, in displacement and detention at checkpoints, on military bases and in rural areas where women undertake livelihood activities. And we know that socioeconomically marginalized women in areas beyond the reach of law institutions are at the great greatest risk.

Prosecution is also a form of prevention and can help convert the centuries-old culture of impunity for such crimes into a culture of deterrence. Whereas impunity normalizes violence, justice reinforces global norms. It is time to move from visibility to accountability and to ensure that today's documentation translates into tomorrow's prosecutions. The prohibition on sexual violence is clear and categorical, yet norms have no power unless they are known. Every member of the Council can lead the way in reflecting that prohibition in their military manuals, international humanitarian law dissemination and training, codes of conduct and military disciplinary measures at all levels of the chain of command.

We have said for several years in the Chamber that sexual violence is preventable, not inevitable. It is time now to make accountability inevitable. Survivors must be seen by their societies as the holders of rights that will be respected and enforced, and societies must realize that the only shame of rape is in committing, commanding or condoning it.

In 2021, four encouraging developments took place in terms of transitional justice.

First, in Guatemala, five former members of the paramilitary group, the Civil Self-Defence Patrol, were convicted and sentenced for crimes of sexual violence committed against indigenous Maya Achi women in the 1980s.

Secondly, in Iraq, the Council of Representatives adopted the Yezidi Survivors Law, which provides support to victims of Da'esh atrocities.

Thirdly, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a ruling that found the State responsible for violations of the rights of Colombian journalist Mrs. Jineth Bedoya Lima following her two-decade quest for justice for abduction and sexual abuse. Yesterday, I was pleased to announce Mrs. Bedoya's appointment as one of my mandate's Global Champions for the Fight Against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Fourthly, under the auspices of universal jurisdiction, a former official of the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate, Anwar R., was convicted by the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany, for crimes against humanity, including sexual violence, committed in 2011 and 2012.

Each year, we report three or four landmark judgments against the backdrop of thousands of United Nations-verified cases that meet the definition of international crime. Accordingly, I regret to note that the few emblematic cases of justice delivered are still the exception that proves the rule of justice denied.

In June 2021, my Office launched model legislative provisions and guidance on the investigation and prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence, which aims to ensure that the national legislation comprehensively criminalizes all forms of sexual violence and protects all individuals at risk. The guidance supports the implementation of resolution 2467 (2019), which calls on Member States to strengthen legislation and enhance the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence in order to deliver justice that is accessible, empowering and ultimately transformative, in line with a survivor-centred approach.

Yet accountability processes, while critical, they are no substitute for compliance with international norms in the first instance. This year's report lists 49 parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence in situations on the agenda of the Council, with more than 70 per cent of persistent perpetrators having appeared on the list for five or more years, without taking remedial or corrective action.

It is critical to cohere the practice of listing suspected perpetrators and the practice of imposing targeted and graduated measures by sanctions committees to improve compliance. Leveraging the credible threat of sanctions can change the calculation of parties to conflict that operate on the assumption that rape is cost-free, or even profitable, in the political economy

of war, in which women and girls are trafficked, traded and sold. Eight sanctions regimes now include sexual violence as part of their designation criteria. In 2021, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya listed the de facto manager of the notorious Al Nasr detention centre for abuses, including sexual violence.

In terms of the way forward, the report recommends targeted action to reinforce structural prevention through political and diplomatic engagements to address sexual violence in ceasefire and peace agreements; the use of early-warning indicators of sexual violence to inform monitoring, threat analysis and early response; curtailing the flow of small arms and light weapons; gender-responsive justice and security sector reform, including vetting, training, codes of conduct, zero-tolerance policies and effective prosecution; amplifying the voices of survivors and affected communities; and supporting women's human rights defenders, as well as victims and witnesses.

Justice, peace and security are inextricably linked. Collaboration between the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission can advance gender-responsive accountability and reconciliation processes that address crimes of sexual violence as part of the consolidation of peace. We must deliver justice, not just law, in communities, as well as courtrooms, and ensure that reparations reach survivors to help them rebuild shattered lives and livelihoods.

It is critical that Member States reinforce the architecture established by the Council through resolution 1888 (2009), including the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which works to strengthen institutional safeguards against impunity, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and women's protection advisers, whose timely deployment to the field is vital to timely reporting and response. We must marshal a level of resolve and resources equal to the scale of the challenge, including by replenishing the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Prevention Multi-Partner Trust Fund that supports our work.

Our special report on women and girls who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence in conflict and children born of sexual violence in conflict (S/2022/77), circulated in January, also sets out a platform of legal, policy and operational recommendations,

including reforming discriminatory nationality laws and practices. I look forward to the special report being debated by the Council later this year.

The Charter of the United Nations was born out of war to chart the path to peace. No amount of protection or assistance is a substitute for peace. As a wise woman once said, we can no more win a war than an earthquake. Wars are indeed unwinnable and yet their social and economic aftershocks affect us all.

Throughout history, human progress has been interrupted by plagues, wars and authoritarian rule. Issues we thought had been consigned to the ash heap of history remain in our daily headlines. We cannot choose the times we live; in we can choose only how we respond. We must not rest until every survivor, every civilian, can sleep under the cover of justice.

There is no place in the modern world for gender apartheid, for strong men in place of strong institutions or for medieval wars of looting, pillage and rape. Women's rights are not Western rights. They are human rights, and they are universal in times of war and peace. Prevention is the best form of protection, including the prevention of conflict itself. We must rise to the challenge of our times. Inaction is not an option.

The President: I thank Ms. Patten for her very extensive and detailed briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Murad.

Ms. Murad: I, too, thank Ambassador Woodward and the United Kingdom for organizing this important debate as one of their signature events and for inviting me to brief the Council today.

We are gathered at a moment of global instability—a moment shaped by a pandemic, a war and a climate crisis. In times like these, issues that affect women and girls, such as conflict-related sexual violence, tend to be pushed aside, as if they were somehow secondary to the real issues. The truth is that these are precisely the moments when protecting, supporting and investing in women and girls should be urgent priorities.

For every setback our societies face, women and girls are forced to take 10 steps backward. That is particularly true in times of conflict. History shows that whenever armed conflict erupts anywhere in the world, rape and brutality follow. We are seeing that in Ukraine as we speak, with reports of sexual violence that should alarm us all. Sexual violence is not a side

effect of conflict. It is a tactic of war as old as time. Groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) understand the destabilizing effect of gender-based violence, and so must we.

ISIS began targeting my Yazidi community in 2014. Thousands of Yazidis were massacred. Others fled on foot, facing thirst, starvation and blistering temperatures. In addition to the murders, ISIS captured more than 6,000 Yazidi women and children. Women and girls like me, my nieces and my sisters were sold and raped. Those of us who survived were considered lucky. However, the nightmare continues even now, eight years later, for more than 2,800 women and children who are still living in captivity and enduring sexual violence at the hands of ISIS.

We are here today to discuss accountability, not only in the aftermath of conflict-related sexual violence but, just as important, as a tool for preventing such violence from occurring in the first place. In particular, there are three aspects of accountability that I would like to highlight: justice, support for survivors and a commitment to gender equity in the long term.

The pursuit of justice is one of the most visible forms of accountability. Last year, a German court convicted an ISIS member of genocide. It was the first time that had ever happened anywhere in the world. That historic verdict is an important step, but as I stand before the Council today, my question is: what next?

ISIS led a systemic campaign of sexual violence to destroy Yazidi women and the Yazidi community. The United Nations has condemned the group's actions as genocide. The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has collected reams of evidence documenting the atrocities that ISIS committed against women and girls. Other terrorist groups and oppressive regimes have watched as ISIS members openly brag about enslaving Yazidi women and girls, while facing few, if any, consequences on the world stage.

As survivors of sexual violence, it is not easy for us to tell our stories, but we do it to prevent what happened to us from happening to others. We are called brave, but the courage we really want to see is from leaders in a position to do something, whether they are Heads of State, States Members of the United Nations or corporate leaders. We need more than moral outrage. We need action.

To those assembled in the Chamber, I say that now is the time to put ISIS on trial for genocide and sexual violence, refer the case to the International Criminal Court or establish a hybrid court by treaty to prosecute ISIS crimes. In the meantime, other nations should follow Germany's example and use the principle of universal jurisdiction to try war criminals for the atrocities they commit, including sexual violence. Those trials must proceed with transparency for survivors, who deserve their day in court.

What message will it send if Member States let the perpetrators of sexual violence continue to enjoy immunity? If States want to establish deterrence and assure Yazidi women and survivors everywhere that the international community stands with us, they can no longer delay justice. We have the evidence; all we need is the political will.

Accountability means that those who perpetrate violence should face consequences for their actions. But it cannot stop there. Victims are not to blame for sexual violence. Yet, too often, we are left to piece our lives back together on our own, abandoned by Governments and the international community, which failed in their mandate to protect the basic human rights of all people. Survivors need solidarity and tangible support to empower them and provide a path to recovery.

Reparations and recognition are an essential part of justice. That is why I co-founded the Global Survivors Fund with my friend and colleague, Dr. Denis Mukwege, to provide interim reparations to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. After all, to survivors, reparations are not some theoretical idea or a topic for legal debate; they are the difference between going hungry and having enough food to put on the table, between sustaining lifelong injuries and accessing reproductive health care and between being cast out of our communities and being able to put a roof over our heads. Through that project, we want survivors to know that we stand with them, and that they are not alone.

Eight years after ISIS's genocide, survivors who returned to Sinjar are still struggling to recover in the face of political disputes between Baghdad and Erbil, with militia groups vying for control of our homeland. The Security Council should send a special envoy to end the suffering of Yazidis in Iraq. Member States have a moral responsibility not to abandon genocide survivors.

That brings me to my third point. Every time that we see a new conflict, there is an outpouring of thoughts and prayers. But, as I know from personal experience, a few days, or even a week, in the news cycle does nothing to address the systemic challenges that women face. That is true from Iraq and Ethiopia to the Democratic Republic of Congo, to Ukraine and to conflict zones everywhere.

It is not enough to talk about accountability and prevention in times of crisis. We need long-term commitments to advancing global gender equity because gender equity is key to democracy. That means combating gender bias and stereotypes everywhere that they occur: in homes and families, as well as our education systems. It means recognizing that what is true in times of conflict is true in times of peace. If we want strong, stable communities, we must listen to women.

To be very clear, when I say that we should listen to women, I do not mean it in some abstract way. I mean that policymakers should leave the halls of power and go out into affected communities to ask women what they need. One solution will not work for everyone. Throughout the world, different socioeconomic and political circumstances impact women's rights. Compounding factors, such as race, religion, class and access to health care, education and employment, require different solutions. Survivors know best what they need to heal and recover, so why not ask them? At Nadia's Initiative, the organization that I founded, every day we see that the most effective work is community-led and survivor-centred and takes a holistic approach. The work that is being done to help survivors must be done hand in hand with them.

It is not just the act of listening that matters. How one listens, the way in which one communicates with survivors and what one does with the information that one collects — all those things matter, too. Documenting sexual violence is crucial to accountability and prevention. But, too often, survivors who speak out face shame, stigma and a lack of transparency about how their testimonies will, or will not, be used, or the likely outcomes.

That is why I look forward to joining Lord Ahmad tomorrow to officially announce the Murad Code, a set of guidelines intended to change norms around how journalists, investigators and anyone tasked with documenting and investigating conflict-related sexual

violence interacts with survivors. Those guidelines were shaped by feedback from survivors around the globe and aim to promote greater respect, understanding, transparency and healing.

In conclusion, accountability can be a crucial component of prevention, but only if it includes meaningful justice, the services and support that survivors need and the ultimate goal of advancing global gender equity. Each person in this Chamber has the power to make that a reality, but only if they choose to act.

Everywhere I go, I meet survivors of sexual violence who bravely tell their stories in the face of stigma, shame and even physical danger. If women who have suffered such immense loss and incredible pain can find the strength to not only rebuild their lives, but help their families, communities and entire countries, surely the rest of the world can find the strength to take meaningful steps to end sexual violence in conflict. As survivors, we look to those, the leaders, in this Chamber to act with the same courage that we have shown. Survivors do not want pity; we want justice.

The President: I thank Ms. Murad for her briefing, her deep insights and her continuing courage and strength regarding this important issue.

I now give the floor to Ms. Karkoutly.

Ms. Karkoutly: My name is Mariana Karkoutly. I am a co-founder of Huquqyat, a membership-based organization of women lawyers and legal practitioners, advocating for accountability in Syria. I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to deliver this briefing today.

Let me start by saying that what drove me to study law was not love of the law, but the experience of injustice. While studying law under a dictatorship did not teach me much, witnessing women in Syria fighting for their rights did.

Accountability, the theme of this open debate, is a difficult word to say in the Syrian context. We have experienced all sorts of atrocities for more than a decade, with more than 350,000 people killed, tens of thousands arbitrarily detained or disappeared, nearly 13 million displaced and another 14 million in need of humanitarian assistance. Parties to the conflict have violated international human rights and humanitarian law, used chemical weapons and committed acts that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Government forces and armed groups continue to murder, torture and use sexual and gender-based violence against civilians as a matter of policy.

Yet despite discussing Syria for more than a decade, the Security Council has failed to take actions to hold perpetrators accountable. The Syrian Government has systematically violated not only international law, but many of the Council's own resolutions. Meanwhile, members of the Council have blocked urgent action on Syria, shielded the Syrian regime from accountability, and vetoed resolutions on humanitarian assistance and investigating the use of chemical weapons against civilians 16 times.

My statement today will focus on three issues: the use of sexual violence against women; entrenched gender discrimination in Syria, and next steps for the international community to ensure accountability.

As documented by the Commission of Inquiry on Syria, sexual and gender-based violence has been used against civilians during ground operations, at checkpoints and in detention, across the country since 2011, primarily by Government forces and associated militia, but also by other armed groups. It has been called a devastating and pervasive feature of the Syrian conflict and part of a widespread and systematic attack against civilians, amounting to crimes against humanity. This violence continues as we speak.

I have worked as an independent investigator with the support of the Centre for Justice and Accountability since 2020 on case-building against members of the Al-Assad regime responsible for crimes against civilians. To date, we have documented 54 testimonies, including those of survivors of sexual violence. These are just some of the hundreds that have been documented out of tens of thousands of survivors.

Over the last decade, at least 150,000 people in Syria are estimated to have been arbitrarily arrested, detained or disappeared; at least 9,700 women still are missing or being detained. These women — lawyers, journalists, activists and others — have been detained for opposing the regime, or often, to punish or threaten male relatives who have opposed the regime. In places of detention, sexual violence is used to humiliate them, punish them for rebelling and force confessions. Women in detention have been subject to all kinds of sexual violence, including rape, torture, sexual harassment, electric shocks directed at genital areas, intimate searches, forced abortions and forced nudity.

Survivors of rape and sexual violence in detention, estimated to number in the thousands, have largely been unable to report these crimes for fear of marginalization or further retaliation. Discrimination and violence against women and girls who have been detained, or who have faced sexual violence, have resulted in abandonment, divorce, so-called honour killings and suicide.

The Syrian regime has taken advantage of this: it knew that by targeting women in this way, they were in fact targeting their communities as a whole. This is why arresting and detaining women, leaving their families with no information about their fate, has been a key tool used to suppress Syrian dissent since 2011. The systematic occurrence of these crimes across the country provides reasonable grounds to assert that the regime has weaponized gender-based violence as a matter of State policy.

The Syrian regime's actions have been possible because of a corrupt legal system and entrenched discrimination against women and girls in Syria, which affects their access to housing and land, property rights, custody of their children, and their protection. For instance, laws in Syria do not criminalize sexual or gender-based violence against women or marital rape. Syrian women cannot pass their nationality to their children, and even where laws have changed, social practices have not. Furthermore, sexual and gender-based violence against women does not end inside Syria, but continues in the camps, settlements and cities throughout the region, where millions of Syrian refugees face discrimination, poverty and lack of access to health care and education, all while experiencing pressure to return to a country that is not yet safe.

Syrians are desperate for justice after more than a decade of war. Domestic accountability is impossible as long as the Al-Assad regime remains in power. The universal jurisdiction cases currently being pursued against suspects for crimes committed in Syria, while positive, have also had limits, including how fear of retaliation for reporting to local authorities, as well as the trauma and stigmatization of survivors of sexual violence, affects the ability and willingness of victims to come forward.

Syrians can no longer wait for justice. We encourage all States Members of the United Nations to continue to pursue accountability under universal jurisdiction. But we are also looking to the Security Council for help,

in the form of referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Despite 14 years of the Security Council's condemnation of the use of sexual violence in conflict, impunity prevails, not only in Syria but in many other conflicts on the Council's agenda. This is often not because sexual violence has been inadequately criminalized, or because perpetrators are unknown, but owing to a lack of political courage. The Security Council must call on the Syrian Government to respect international law, end attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and ensure an immediate and permanent nationwide ceasefire; immediately end torture, inhumane treatment and sexual violence, including in places of arrest and detention; release all arbitrarily detained persons and allow unconditional access to all places of detention by international humanitarian organizations; and release the names, status and locations of all detainees, and a timetable for their release.

I urge the Security Council, States Members of the United Nations and the Organization itself to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court; adopt a resolution on the situation of detainees and missing persons that underlines the Syrian Government's obligations under international law and reflects the priorities outlined by associations representing victims, survivors and their families, such as the Truth and Justice Charter, including support for the creation of a mechanism to clarify the fate of missing persons and to support their families; investigate and prosecute all perpetrators of sexual violence, and ensure that women's rights are at their core of all accountability efforts; ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all ongoing and future political, peace or reconciliation processes; prioritize a survivor-centred, rights-based approach to prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence; ensure that the Special Envoy for Syria prioritizes human rights and international humanitarian law, including prohibitions against arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture and gender-based violence, in political discussions, and that he convenes Syrian civil society on how to address these issues and regularly briefs the Security Council on these efforts; renew the cross-border mechanism for at least 12 months and reauthorize access via all original crossing points, as cross-border access is an indispensable lifeline for millions of people in Syria, the majority of whom are

women and children; and pressure arms-exporting countries to stop arms proliferation and prevent the use of weapons against all civilians.

When people in Syria watch conflicts rage in Ukraine and other parts of the world today, we are reminded of our own suffering and the abject failure of this body to stop the violence.

I join my voice with those of the millions of girls and women from Syria who are not here with me today and call on the Council to take action. There can be no peace without justice.

The President: I thank Ms. Karkoutly for her very powerful briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Berhanu.

Ms. Berhanu: Thank you for allowing me to bring the stories of Ethiopian women to the Chamber of the Security Council.

I speak to you today as an Ethiopian woman, one who has heard those testimonies and seen those injuries first-hand in Tigray; one who carries the guilt of survival and silence. Today I hope to do justice to the experiences of the millions of Ethiopian women who have suffered in this war.

In this briefing, I will focus on six points in relation to conflict-related sexual violence in Ethiopia since the war began in Tigray in November 2020 and expanded to the neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar. These points are drawn directly from human rights investigations and reports that have been made public, as well as my own visits to the region.

First, rape has been perpetrated systematically and used as a tactic of war. It is framed as a means of reprisal and leveraged as a bonding tool for members of allied military forces.

When the war first started, Blen, a 21-year-old waitress from Badme, along with around 30 other Tigrayan women, was held against her will and subjected to sexual slavery, starvation and gang rape by a group of Eritrean and Ethiopian soldiers who took turns with her. I documented many other stories like Blen's during multiple visits to the region of Tigray before June 2021. Sexual violence was used to terrorize communities and as a bonding tool among the allied Eritrean Defence Forces, the Ethiopian National Defence Force and the Amhara regional militia and special forces through the shared experience of exploiting women's bodies. The

consistency across victims' accounts shows that those crimes were committed intentionally with a degree of organization and planning.

Secondly, sexual violence is ethnically motivated. A Tigrayan woman was fleeing the conflict zone with her children. Along the way she encountered the Amhara militia, who separated her from her family, gang-raped her and inserted a hot metal rod into her uterus. They declared, "A Tigrayan should never give birth". Similar incidents of rape with claims of "cleansing Tigrayan blood" and mutilating women's bodies to prevent the birth of more generations of Tigrayans have been extensively covered by various human rights reports.

Thirdly, sexual violence is used to humiliate survivors and their communities. Sexual violence has often been perpetrated in front of family members. An Amhara woman was beaten and raped in the presence of her husband and child by two Tigrayan force members. She and her child witnessed her husband being killed as he tried to stop the assault.

Men and boys have also been sexually assaulted. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission found that in the town of Samre, in Tigray, 600 men and boys were stripped and forcibly paraded, some completely naked, while Eritrean female soldiers mocked them and took pictures.

Fourthly, women with disabilities and other vulnerable communities have been at particular risk during this conflict. Many women with disabilities were specifically targeted in the region of Tigray as they were presumed to have been fighters in the previous war. Girls, elderly women and women belonging to minority and indigenous communities also face higher risks. The lack of access to the region for independent human rights monitoring has made it difficult to document the impact of the conflict in minority communities, especially those living in disputed areas on the Eritrean border, such as the Irob and Kunama in Tigray.

Fifthly, the conflict in northern Ethiopia, and the effective siege of the Tigray region in particular, has undermined women's rights, including access to reproductive health care and psychosocial support, exacerbating the impacts of sexual violence.

In May 2021, I visited a shelter supported by Mekelle University in Tigray, where many lactating mothers and their infants had taken refuge. Those women — some of whom had survived sexual assault

while pregnant — could not access timely sexual and reproductive care owing to the widespread destruction of medical facilities and limited deliveries of aid due to the Government blockade of the region.

The conflict in northern Ethiopia has increased women's vulnerability irrespective of their ethnicity. I carry with me the story of Kadija, a nine-months-pregnant woman from Afar, who fled the shelling of Aba'ala town by the Tigrayan Defence Forces with her five children and elderly mother. She gave birth under a tree after having walked for nine days, two of which while in labour. In a country with one of the highest maternal mortality rates globally and a lack of infrastructure specifically in pastoralist communities and areas, the conflict puts the lives of many Ethiopian women in immediate and grave danger.

Lack of access to psychosocial support services also means that the mental health of survivors hangs in the balance. Many have already died by suicide. The story of a 50-year-old Amhara woman from Shewa-Robit in central Ethiopia, who was gang-raped by Tigrayan fighters in the presence of her son, who was in the next room, and later died by suicide highlights just how tragic the situation is. Initial reports also indicate disproportionate rates of suicide among internally displaced persons across various parts of Tigray. Amid a total Internet and telecom blackout, I fear that the extent of the trauma experienced by the community remains unknown.

Sixthly, while cases of sexual violence from Tigray, Afar and Amhara have attracted international attention, women from other communities across Ethiopia, specifically the Oromo, Gumuz, Konso, Kimant and Somali, specifically Ogaden, continue to experience conflict-related sexual violence, including by State forces, without any attention from the international community.

The central theme of today's open debate is accountability for sexual violence. Resolution 2467 (2019) recalls the critical role of national investigations. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights were able to conduct a joint investigation that was limited in scope and analysis. But unfortunately, and more broadly, we have witnessed deliberate delays in investigation, the withholding of information, failings on the part of the justice system, the destruction of evidence, including statistical

records, and the harassment and detention of journalists by the Ethiopian State and allied parties to the conflict.

As we have seen in other contexts and in the spilling of that war into the broader northern region, lack of accountability and justice for past crimes continues to fuel a sense of grievance that drives a vicious cycle of retaliatory attacks. Based on the trends and stories that I have highlighted, I would like to offer the following recommendations to the members of the Security Council.

First, members should use their platform to demand that efforts to document, investigate and prevent sexual violence in conflict are survivor-centred and conducted in a dignified, safe and confidential manner. As part of the pursuit of justice for survivors, the Security Council should also champion the work of the recently established International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, including by urging all parties to the conflict to fully cooperate and provide unimpeded access to the Commission.

Secondly, the Council should demand that all parties ensure full and safe humanitarian access to Tigray and other areas of conflict and ensure that humanitarian aid prioritizes the needs of survivors. That includes comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care and addressing stigma. Service providers must also continue to adhere to core humanitarian standards, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on gender-based violence and mental health and psychosocial support.

Finally, I call on the three African countries that are members of the Security Council, which can be counted as some of the strongest voices for women, peace and security in this Chamber. I urge them to work here and in the African Union (AU), through its Peace and Security Council, which has the mandate to request a proactive intervention from the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, and to take a harder look at the prevailing view that supporting investigations of conflict-related sexual violence in Ethiopia could somehow derail the proposed reform agenda of the current Government.

This war has been so devastating to witness — first, because of the sheer scale of human suffering and, secondly, because many Ethiopians have defended that violence in the name of patriotism. But my patriotism, my political loyalty and my allegiance lie exclusively and firmly with Ethiopian women, and I thank the

Council for having invited one of them to speak to it today.

The President: I thank Ms. Berhanu, again, for a very powerful testimony and statement.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

May I begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten. The strength of the relationship between the United Kingdom and her Office is something that we hold very dear, and we welcome the continued coordination and strength of the work that we are doing on this important agenda.

I thank our brave activists, Mariana Karkoutly and Hilina Berhanu, for their stark insights and for their practical recommendations on the responsibilities and the importance of action from us, the Security Council, and, of course, Nadia Murad, as her determination, her courage and her example have at their heart a real willpower to build a world for survivors. Simply put, it is an inspiration for me and I know I speak for every member of the Security Council. Her testimony today is, once again, reflective of the central objective that we all share.

Yet, as we have heard again today in the powerful testimonies and Special Representative Patten's briefing, disturbing reports of rape and sexual violence in Ukraine continue to emerge. We are reminded yet again that when conflict erupts, sexual violence soon follows. As we have heard, in northern Ethiopia, in Syria and in Ukraine, we are witnessing the devastating effects on communities, families and, in particular, on women and girls. It is important that we come together and stand up for those courageous survivors — not just to provide hope but to provide action and, ultimately, justice.

It is clear that impunity continues to be the norm for perpetrators; whereas it should be the exception — we must strive for that. Frankly, the fact that we are here and that this is happening in the year 2022 — and let us reflect on that — is not just unacceptable; it is utterly shocking.

Therefore, we must strive to do more collectively to end the violence and, as we heard in each of the powerful statements by our briefers, to ultimately deliver justice and accountability for survivors. We need to ensure that survivors can safely record their experiences in a way

that strengthens the pursuit of justice. That is a pivotal and crucial first step towards accountability.

However, as we heard from Ms. Murad in her powerful testimony, it is far from the reality for many survivors around the world. Frankly, we must ask the question of ourselves: why? Why have we failed to protect? Why have we failed in our collective duty to put survivors first? Despite numerous forms of guidance for those collecting information and evidence from survivors and witnesses, mistakes continue to be made.

Those mistakes — albeit made without any bad intentions — can allow the wheels of justice to slow down and, indeed, to destroy lives. Too many survivors are not told about what their options are or given the time and space to make their own choices about how their testimonies are best used. Too many survivors continue to face unnecessary re-interviewing — 27 times, as one courageous survivor told me; I ask my colleagues to reflect on that. Too many interviews are being overheard or interrupted, thereby diluting the impact of those testimonies, so that they do not meet the threshold and that is too often put forward as the reason why prosecutions cannot take place.

The consequences can be devastating and soul-destroying, ending all hope. Simply put, that is unacceptable. Survivors are being re-traumatized time and time again. Work to deliver justice and accountability is being undermined. That is why it is vital that we end those harmful practices and put survivors' rights at the very heart of evidence-gathering.

I am therefore greatly humbled to join Nadia's Initiative and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations in releasing the Murad Code today. First, I turn to Ms. Murad and thank her. She and I have known one another for many years. She inspires me and her courage is a powerful example to us all, as we have heard again today. The Murad Code, to which she has so kindly lent her name, is a code of conduct for the collection of information and evidence from survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

Importantly, as we have heard in all of today's contributions, including from Special Representative Patten, it has been shaped by survivors. Survivors must be at the heart of the solutions we see. It has also brought together Governments, international organizations and civil society, because it is our collective responsibility to place survivors' needs at the very heart of our work.

Therefore, I urge everyone involved in documenting and investigating conflict-related sexual violence to follow the Murad Code. In fact, go further: in my mind, it should become the gold standard for any non-governmental organization, Government, Government agency, human rights institution or civil society group working in the field. Putting survivors first and at the centre of investigations should not be an option; it should be done by everyone, everywhere.

But our collective efforts cannot stop there. This year, we are exploring all options to strengthen international action, including an international convention, as proposed by our Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss. Today, I am also pleased to announce that from 28 to 30 November, we will also host an international conference on the issue of preventing sexual violence in conflict, marking 10 years since we launched that initiative.

We will also, importantly, continue to bring faith and belief leaders together in support of survivors through the Declaration of Humanity. It cannot be right that groups such as Da'esh use the veil of religion erroneously and perversely to somehow justify their abhorrent crimes and actions. Faith leaders continue to stand up and clearly state that those actions are not in the name of their religion or any faith or belief across the world.

We will also make further progress to enhance the rights and well-being of children born of sexual violence and rape. I was honoured to announce the call to action last November, but let us put that into perspective. A child born of such a crime should be given compassion; instead, they are stigmatized and rejected. That has to change at all levels.

We will also respond robustly to reports of sexual violence in conflict, wherever and whenever they occur. We have just heard from Ms. Berhanu about the distressing situation in Ethiopia. The nature and scale of the reports of sexual violence that have come out of Tigray, Amhara and Afar are deeply disturbing. Yet many communities, as we heard in her testimony, remain cut off from communications and are therefore unable to tell their stories and seek the hope and support they need.

That is why it was important for the United Kingdom — and I thank our Ambassador and her team in that regard — to invite the first Ethiopian civil society representative to brief the Security Council

today on the situation in northern Ethiopia. It was also incredibly important to hear directly from Ms. Berhanu, an Ethiopian woman who has been integral to feminist youth movements and who has recently worked with communities across the country that have been affected by conflict-related related sexual violence.

The Government of the United Kingdom has committed more than £7 million to support survivors in northern Ethiopia and improve national accountability systems. We will also continue to work to provide expertise to build capacity to hold perpetrators to account.

In that respect, the gauntlet may have been thrown, but I welcome our colleagues from the African Union and pay tribute to the African Union's leadership on conflict-related sexual violence. Thirty African countries now have a national action plan on women and peace and security, providing the essential framework for addressing the issue and promoting women's political participation in conflict-affected contexts. Ms. Karkoutly also referred to how essential that is.

Within the framework and the family of the United Nations, as Special Representative Patten and I have discussed, we have incredible mediation networks of women. We need to ensure that that expertise and those insights are deployed directly, not just in resolving conflicts but in actually building sustainable peace.

Sadly, as we also heard from Ms. Karkoutly, we have heard again how rape continues to be used to destroy the lives of many Syrian women and girls by various parties to the conflict. The United Kingdom continues to provide support in that area — £4 million through its Conflict, Stability and Security Fund have been used in response to that crisis. We have also strengthened the medical documentation of attacks, in accordance with international standards, and improved support services for survivors. I am absolutely convinced that the Murad Code will be an important contribution to enhance that collection of evidence. I was also pleased to see the first conviction for conflict-related sexual violence in Syria, delivered in Koblenz in January.

Let me assure the Council that, as we look around the world, the United Kingdom will also continue to support Afghan women, who face some of the highest rates of violence in the world and are watching the progress made in recent decades unravel in front of their eyes. Let us also send a very clear message to those who seek to suppress women's rights and the

rights of education for girls. That is a message for the Taliban to hear clearly. Islam, as a religion, bases itself on equality for girls and rights for women. Islam is clear, are they? Our message to them is — empower girls, educate girls, empower women. The evidence is in front of them. Societies prosper, nations progress. We are also pushing to integrate services for all survivors of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, into Afghan health-care provision. That is being informed directly by the people who know best, including many Afghan women leaders who are helping us on this important agenda.

We are also working with the International Rescue Committee, the United Nations Population Fund and others on programmes to protect women and girls and provide access to gender-based violence services.

We are collectively shocked at the abhorrent testimonies we hear in every conflict, but are now particularly shocked at the abhorrent testimonies emerging from Ukraine. The reports of rape and sexual violence committed by Russian armed forces must be properly investigated. That is why the United Kingdom has worked with partners to refer the situation in Ukraine to the International Criminal Court (ICC), to establish a commission of inquiry through the Human Rights Council and, with the support of Ukraine, to establish an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe mission of experts. In March, we announced an additional £1 million in funding for the ICC to help uncover evidence of war crimes.

Let me put it simply and starkly — sexual violence and rape are a vile stain on humankind. Wherever it occurs and whoever the perpetrators, it is our collective moral duty and our absolute obligation to work together to help survivors and to do all we can to stamp it out. As Ms. Murad said, we must work together to provide the routes and avenues to see justice for survivors.

To perpetrators, we must send a very clear message — not just from the Security Council. Every person in every society must be determined to send that same unequivocal message in all of its clarity — they will be found; they will face justice; and they will be held to account.

Finally, to the survivors — to those who are here and to the courageous survivors around the world — we thank them for the hope they provide in the face of such challenges and unimaginable consequences they have faced. We thank them for their courage and conviction

to carry on. Sexual violence is not just a crime against them, it is a crime against our common and shared humanity. We stand for them, and we will always stand with them.

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important discussion today. I also want to thank Special Representative Patten for her remarks. The United States is proud to support the important work of the Special Representative's Office. Most of all, I would like to thank the three briefers for sharing their powerful stories. Their courage and their strength are an inspiration to all of us.

As we all know, sexual violence is a horrific and deliberate tactic in conflict. It is used to terrorize, to destabilize and to break communities and people down. Its impact ripples out far beyond survivors, and it fuels instability. Unfortunately, this unspeakable practice is not new. As I heard today's briefers, I was recalling attending meetings in the early nineties with Somali women who were victims of violence in Somalia and hearing their horrific stories of rape and their plea to all of us to support them. And here we are today, hearing those same pleas from today's briefers. The same acts of violence are still being committed around the world today. And women, like those Somali women that I spoke to in the 1990s, are sitting here listening to us today.

On Monday, we outlined the threats to women and girls in Ukraine from Russia's brutal and unprovoked war (see S/PV.9013). We cannot forget or look away from the way rape and sexual violence have been used as a weapon of war in Ethiopia, Syria and other conflicts around the world. The Council has spent a great deal of time discussing those issues and noting them with great concern. Well, now it is time for us to act.

As we heard today, expressions of concern are not enough.

First, we and all Governments need to hold perpetrators accountable. We must do more as a global community to actually implement the international commitments that we have all agreed to, as Ms. Patten said to us today. Governments, instead of denying these acts, must acknowledge them and they must address them. They have to stop intimidating

victims, silencing their voices, silencing those who raise concern and advocate for them and hold those responsible, accountable.

We must explore ways to use the diplomatic tools we have, both as individual Member States and as a collective, to do everything we can to ensure that perpetrators do not get away with these acts of conflict-related sexual violence. That means strengthening quality, ethical and effective documentation efforts.

We caution against any action that would duplicate or dilute the efficacy of our existing Security Council mandates and legal frameworks. We have the tools we need — we just need to use them. We cannot let ourselves get distracted from the urgency of accountability, especially in settings where we continue to receive reports of conflict-related sexual violence. After all, holding perpetrators accountable is not only the right thing to do. It deters others from enacting this violence in future. It strengthens the rule of law. It makes reconciliation more likely and it makes inclusive and democratic transitions possible.

Secondly, we must defend and empower survivors through a survivor-centred approach. That means listening to survivors, responding to their unique needs and providing the resources and legal support they ask for and need. We have learned just how important it is to create a supportive environment to avoid re-traumatizing those who have experienced conflict-related sexual violence and to ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect.

When we provide survivors with the resources they need to heal and to recover, we help them tremendously and we help break the silence and the stigma surrounding sexual violence in conflict, as well. Centring our support around survivors while securing justice for them is the clearest and most powerful way to empower survivors to become agents of peace and voices of change, as we see from our colleague, Ms. Murad, across this room. I once again thank Nadia very much for bringing her voice to us today.

Thirdly and finally, because all gender-based violence is rooted in gender inequality, we must advance the empowerment of women and girls in all of their diversity. To that end, the United Nations and all Member States should apply conflict-sensitive and participatory gender analysis to our interventions and work. We need to ensure that we are addressing the underlying societal norms and power relations that,

when combined with weak or absent State institutions, lead to gender-based violence.

We need to advance gender-sensitive early warning and response and we must persevere in our promotion of the meaningful participation of women in decision-making roles, especially in conflict prevention and resolution and peacekeeping processes. When we integrate women and girls into atrocity prevention efforts, we do more to prevent those atrocities. It is that simple.

In the long term, the best defence against conflict-related sexual violence is an equal and just society — one in which all women and girls enjoy respect for their human rights, we enjoy equal protection under the law, we have timely access to justice and we have the educational opportunities we all deserve.

As late Secretary of State Madeleine Albright used to say, democracy is a parent to peace and common sense tells us that true democracy is not possible without the full participation of women. Let us therefore make democracy possible. Let us build those just an inclusive societies. And in the meantime, let us hold perpetrators accountable, take a survivor-centred approach and integrate gender equity in everything we do. As Nadia said, survivors do not want our pity; they want justice. All of the women who spoke today made recommendations to us. Let us pay homage to them and follow their lead.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten and the civil society briefers for their very valuable statements.

Time and time again, we hear in this Chamber how sexual violence is being used as a tactic of war, while every year the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/272) puts into stark relief how we continue to fall short in effectively addressing both the immediate effects and the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence — a grave violation of international law. That is completely abhorrent. I therefore wish to thank the United Kingdom for focusing this year's open debate on accountability as prevention.

I want to thank especially Nadia Murad, Mariana Karkoutly and Hilina Berhanu for their very powerful interventions and for sharing their recommendations. Their testimonies remind us how participation and protection are inextricably linked.

We see in Syria, as Ms. Karkoutly so powerfully testified, conflict-related sexual violence in detention settings; a heightened risk of sexualized violence against displaced women; and negative coping mechanisms, such as child labour and early and forced marriages. Those are of particular concern.

In Ethiopia, we are horrified by the numerous reports, including Ms. Berhanu's account, of systematic rape and gender-based violence. We welcome the Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, which was established by the Human Rights Council to investigate allegations of human rights violations and abuses by all parties. That is essential for accountability, prevention and reconciliation.

In Ukraine, we are deeply shocked by the atrocities committed against civilians in places that have been held by Russian forces, as well as the disturbing reports of conflict-related sexual violence. Ukrainian women and girls are placed further at risk by targeted Russian attacks against civilian infrastructure, forcing displacement and family separation and depriving victims and survivors of access to essential health services.

In the Security Council, we are still discussing what a comprehensive, human-rights based and survivor-centred approach means. In order to make the move to actual implementation, we must recognize the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence and dare to suggest concrete measures. In that spirit, I will put forward three recommendations that Norway firmly believes will promote accountability and prevention if sufficiently scaled up and addressed jointly through multi-stakeholder coordination.

First, we must build the capacity of law-enforcement, security and military sector personnel in both United Nations peace operations and national institutions. That helps reinforce accountability structures, tackles underlying structural inequalities and attitudes, and ensures that policies and action plans are actually put to use. A good example is how the specialized police team for sexual and gender-based violence of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan is supporting South Sudan's National Police Service.

Secondly, we must invest in providing access to coordinated health care and services and legal services and information. A commendable example is the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) one-stop

centres, which are established in cooperation with local authorities, such as the one in Mosul, Iraq.

Thirdly, placing the needs of survivors at the centre of our efforts also means promoting and supporting their agency. They themselves must be allowed to define and design what they think are the necessary measures for prevention, protection and accountability.

As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten has highlighted, reparations are what survivors of conflict-related sexual violence request the most and yet still receive the least. Let me also congratulate Ms. Murad and the United Kingdom on tomorrow's launch of the Murad Code, an important initiative to place survivors right at the centre of investigations and documentation of conflict-related sexual violence.

Financing and resources go hand in hand with monitoring and the implementation of all three of those recommendations. As highlighted by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and echoed by United Nations-Women, UNFPA and civil society, the scale of the resources is far from equal to the scale of actions needed on the ground. Council members and the broader United Nations membership must join forces to ensure that the United Nations and civil society organizations have the necessary expertise, financing and access in place.

Lastly, we all recognize that the elephant in the room is the lack of political will. By sending a strong collective signal in all Council decisions and in our dialogue with conflict parties, we must remind them of their obligations and influence their actions. And we must insist on women's full, equal and meaningful participation and protection from violence, not merely as an end in and of itself but as a prerequisite for peace and stability.

I hope that the Council will send a strong signal today, clearly condemning any and all use of conflict-related sexual violence.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates): I would like to begin by welcoming you, Lord Tariq Ahmad, and thanking you for presiding over this important open debate. We are delighted that the United Kingdom has joined the shared commitment of the presidency of the Security Council to the women and peace and security agenda and we welcome the growing number of signatories.

I would also like to thank Special Representative Pramila Patten for her detailed briefing and the critical work of her Office.

I would like to thank Ms. Murad for her insightful briefing. The United Arab Emirates has always admired Ms. Murad's courageous work and we are proud to support Nadia's Initiative — her non-profit organization that empowers the brave Yazidi women of Iraq.

I also listened carefully to the briefings by Ms. Karkoutly and Ms. Berhanu.

Sexual and gender-based violence is a despicable scourge and the Council must do more to prevent it in conflict situations. When such violence is used as a tool of war, it exacerbates conflict and sets back progress towards inclusive, equal and stable societies. As the rate of conflict and instability around the world increases, so too have the disturbing reports on the situation of women and girls in those settings.

Women and girls in Afghanistan continue to be subjected to sexual slavery and rape. In Syria and Iraq, the heinous acts of Da'esh continue to have an impact. At the Ukrainian border, women and girls are targeted by human and sex traffickers as they flee the conflict. Today we also heard about the tragic experiences faced by women and girls in many other conflicts.

The United Arab Emirates therefore welcomes the focus on structural prevention, resilience-building and accountability in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/272). As members of the international community, the Security Council and the wider United Nations membership have a responsibility to prioritize prevention, ensure accountability and end this horror. In that regard, we would like to make the following recommendations.

First, the most effective response to sexual and gender-based violence is to prevent it from happening in the first place. As the Special Representative has pointed out time and again, effective prevention strategies require addressing root causes, most notably structural gender inequality and harmful social norms. That includes strengthening women's and girls' resilience by ensuring that they enjoy equal access to public life, education and economic participation. Recognizing and understanding their role as active agents of change and dynamic members of society is therefore the first step in prevention.

Secondly, accountability needs to be pursued by upholding and strengthening the rule of law. There is a transformative period following conflict and crisis for strengthening the capacity of relevant national institutions, such as law enforcement and the security sector, so that they may better uphold the rule of law. Capacity-building, if coupled with the deployment of gender and protection expertise with a survivor-centred approach, can be a critical tool for establishing a system that promotes accountability.

Thirdly, the international community must hold non-State armed groups accountable for conflict-related sexual violence, not least because they are increasingly central actors in conflict settings. Grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law require accountability. A strong tool for the Security Council to achieve that is to include conflict-related sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for sanctions on terrorists, individuals and entities, whenever they are responsible for the commission of such acts.

In that regard, we welcome the recent decision made by the Council to designate the Houthis as an entity, including for perpetrating a policy of sexual violence in conflict. Such efforts contribute to the prevention of and response to those crimes on the ground and Council members must remain consistent in their approach.

In conclusion, there is no justification for the fact that conflict-related sexual violence remains a reality. The Council, the United Nations, its Member States, the private sector and civil society must work together and make it a priority to eliminate these crimes once and for all.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): At the outset, we thank the United Kingdom for convening the open debate on this important issue. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten and all other briefers for sharing their insights.

In the past three decades, the international community has played an important role in fixing accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, thereby sending the strong message that sexual violence has no place in the civilized world. The prosecution of conflict-related sexual crimes by the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, resolutions on sexual violence and the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

initiative have contributed to addressing that complex and sensitive issue in its entirety.

Despite that progress, it is indeed distressing that sexual violence in conflict situations continues unabated amid a culture of impunity as a tactic of war, torture and terror in armed conflicts, especially by non-State actors. Again, despite the robust framework put in place by the Security Council since 2007 with the launching of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the levels of compliance by parties to conflict remain low.

The majority of the parties listed in the Secretary General's annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2022/272) are persistent perpetrators who continue to commit or abet sexual violence in armed situations. That must stop. The Council must focus on identifying and bridging the implementation gaps to prevent atrocities and facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors.

My delegation wishes to highlight the following six issues for the consideration of the Council. First, national Governments have the primary responsibility to prosecute and deter such crimes and conflict situations on their territories, even if they are alleged to have been committed by non-State actors. Member States should ensure the effective prosecution of sexual violence as a self-standing crime.

Secondly, upon request, the United Nations must assist national authorities in developing capabilities to strengthen their national legal frameworks and related structures for the speedy investigation and prosecution of perpetrators. That should also be a priority in post-conflict situations in order to address holistically the structural and cross-cutting gender inequalities that perpetuate sexual violence.

Thirdly, Member States must adopt a victim-centred approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence in armed conflicts, in line with resolution 2467 (2019), which seeks to strengthen justice and accountability and calls for a survivor-centred approach in the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. States must ensure adequate focus and resources for comprehensive and non-discriminatory assistance for the victims of sexual violence by providing for medical, psychological, social and legal services.

A key starting point in strengthening the accountability process is to address the endemic stigma attached to survivors of sexual violence and the fear of reprisals by offenders, thereby helping them to come forward to speak to investigators and testify in court.

Fourthly, terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism continue to be the biggest global threat to peace and security, with women suffering disproportionately in the resulting conflicts engendered by them. Sexual violence primarily directed against women and girls and increasingly among men and boys by terrorists remains a cause for concern. The nexus between terrorism, trafficking and sexual violence in armed conflict needs to be broken.

Fifthly, sanctions regimes and other targeted measures by the Council need to be strengthened in order to utilize their full potential to deter the perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflict.

Last but not least, Member States must provide a conducive environment for the participation and inclusion of women in political processes and decision-making. India has moved ahead from women's development to women-led development. We have been advocating that idea for lasting peace in our neighbourhood, including in Afghanistan, in line with resolution 2593 (2021), especially relating to women, children and minorities.

In 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined the Circle of Leadership initiative, which was formally established by the Secretary-General at the high-level meeting on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations. India also signed the Secretary-General's Voluntary Compact on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

India has the distinction of having sent the first all-women formed police unit contingent to Liberia in 2007. That unit mitigated incidents of crime against women, deterred sexual and gender-based violence and helped to rebuild safety and confidence among the Liberian population. In that process, it also operationalized the spirit of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, into action. Those courageous Indian women patrolled Monrovia streets at night, taught Liberian women self-defence skills and conducted classes on combating sexual violence.

India welcomes the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018–2028 to increase the number of

women peacekeepers. We also support increasing the deployment of women protection advisers for effective monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence in the field.

To conclude, India reaffirms its commitment to actively contributing to the collective endeavour of effectively tackling sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

Mr. Parga Cintra (Brazil): It is highly regrettable to be here today once more calling for an end to an utterly unacceptable crime, committed mostly against women and girls, but also against men and boys. Sexual violence in conflict destroys the social fabric of communities. It inflicts long-lasting psychological trauma, having a direct bearing on the resilience of peace and on the prospects for sustainable development.

Perpetrators, be they State or non-State actors, terrorist or mercenaries, should now think twice before committing such crimes. But they do not stop; they continue because they know that, most probably, their actions will go unpunished, even though they are committing well-known violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, abhorrent acts prohibited in times of both war and peace.

Today's briefings and the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/272) serve as stark reminders that the fight to end sexual violence as a weapon of war and as a tool of intimidation and social control in conflict and post-conflict situations is very far from over.

Brazil thanks the United Kingdom for organizing today's debate and the briefers for their comprehensive presentations. In addition to that, we take this opportunity to commend Special Representative Pramila Patten for her work and her Office for the crucial role that it plays in international efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict. We also thank Ms. Nadia Murad, Ms. Mariana Karkoutly and Ms. Hilina Berhanu for their testimonials. They show us the strength of the committed work of victims themselves and of their organizations on the ground.

Addressing the prevailing culture of impunity for the crime of sexual violence in conflict is paramount, not just as a means of reparation but also of delivering justice by making perpetrators accountable for their crimes. As experience shows, it is also an important

tool to prevent the horrific scenarios described by the aforementioned reports and a myriad of other accounts.

As Ms. Sima Bahous told us on Monday (see S/PV.9013) and Ms. Pramila Patten confirmed today, red flags are now flying all over as allegations of sexual violence are reported in the context of the conflict in Ukraine. Brazil reiterates its calls for urgent independent investigations of such allegations, and welcomes the participation of skilled and experienced UN-Women experts to investigate sexual violence, abuse and exploitation in the work of the commission of inquiry of the Human Rights Council.

The Security Council should respond appropriately to all allegations of sexual violence in situations of conflict under its agenda. That response must recognize the problem and strengthen, whenever appropriate, the mandates of peacekeeping operations and special political missions so as to promote real changes on the ground.

Recent reports on South Sudan offer a horrific account of sexual violence being used as a weapon of war and remind us of the grave consequences of widespread impunity for sexual violence in conflict. The recently approved resolution 2625 (2022), on South Sudan, which renews the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), expresses serious concern about those ongoing reports and underlines the urgency of timely investigations, not only to support accountability but also to provide assistance and protection to survivors. It enables UNMISS to curb sexual violence within its core directive for the protection of civilians. In effect, UNMISS may use a variety of means and areas of deployment to deter, prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, including by facilitating access to organizations that provide services and support to survivors.

However, having such provisions in Council resolutions is not enough. The Security Council must urgently address the funding shortfalls that prevent it from delivering a satisfactory response. That includes having the resources, for instance, to continue to deploy women's protection advisers to bring about behavioural change through engagement with the parties to a conflict.

It is also essential to guarantee that predeployment training of United Nations troops and personnel includes capacity-building to recognize and respond to sexual violence in conflict, including on early warning

and risk mitigation. Troops should be trained to help foster an enabling environment for surviving victims to seek support and for perpetrators to be prosecuted for their crimes.

Peace agreements and post-conflict arrangements hardly ever deal with the situation of those who have been subjected to violence during conflict and its aftermath. With the support of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Security Council should continue to advocate for the inclusion of references in peace agreements given the imperative to — ideally, at least — eradicate all forms of sexual violence, especially against all women and girls, and of provisions related to accountability for gender-based violence.

Promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes and peace talks also means tackling the root causes of sexual violence in conflict, including structural gender inequality and harmful social norms that lead to the stigmatization and discrimination of survivors.

Any and every step towards the implementation of women and peace and security resolutions is very welcome.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome, Sir, your presiding over today's meeting. I thank Special Representative Patten and the civil society representatives for their briefings.

According to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/272), sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war and terrorism, causing profound suffering to vulnerable groups, such as women and girls. China strongly condemns all sexual violence against women and girls, and we call on the international community to take comprehensive measures to tackle the problem. In that connection, I would like to make the following remarks.

First, we should build a solid foundation for peace by stepping up conflict prevention and political settlement. As the most vulnerable groups in conflict and turmoil, women and girls are the main victims of sexual violence. The best way to ensure their most basic protection is through the prevention and resolution of conflicts so as to eliminate the breeding ground for sexual violence. The Security Council should make good use of the toolkit provided for under the Charter of the United Nations, step up its efforts for the political settlement of hotspot issues and make greater use of

peaceful means, such as negotiation, good offices and mediation. In line with their mandates, United Nations political and peacekeeping missions should also play their due roles in the early warning of conflict and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Secondly, we must combat terrorism so as to eliminate violence against women by terrorists and extremist forces. In recent years, the activities of terrorist groups, kidnapping and human trafficking, as well as sexual violence and exploitation, have become increasingly rampant. Many alleged perpetrators of sexual violence named in the Secretary-General's report are terrorist groups listed by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities. The international community should closely integrate the elimination of sexual violence in conflicts with the fight against terrorism by adhering to unified standards and jointly combating all terrorist and extremist forces so as to end violence against women and girls.

Thirdly, the international community should amplify "she" power and actively support women's development and empowerment. Sexual violence in conflict is closely related to such root causes and deep-seated imbalances as gender inequality and underdevelopment. The international community should tackle the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in an integrated manner within the overall framework of women's empowerment and development, striving to eliminate gender discrimination and differential treatment, removing the development gap faced by women and promoting synergy between woman's endeavours and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is essential to continue to amplify women's active participation and transformative power in the field of peace and security and actively support women's effective participation in peace processes, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Fourthly, the international community should uphold the leadership of countries concerned and support their efforts in pursuing accountability. The countries concerned have the primary responsibility for preventing and combating sexual violence in conflicts and protecting the women and children of their countries. Based on respecting the judicial sovereignty and the leadership of the countries concerned, the international community should provide targeted assistance in the rule of law, security and humanitarian fields, assist the countries concerned in providing timely protection

and support for victims of sexual violence in conflicts and step up the capacity-building of judicial organs so as to bring perpetrators to justice and bring justice to victims.

Ms. Nadia Murad is a survivor of sexual violence perpetrated by the Islamic State terrorist group. Her tragic experience is heartbreaking, while her tenacity and courage are awe-inspiring. For over seven years, she has been advocating for Yazidi survivors like her. All she asked for could be summarized in two words — accountability and justice.

In East Asia, there exists a group of victims of sexual violence in conflict who have been living with nightmarish memories but have not been able to get justice even until their death. This group consists of individuals who were forcibly drafted by the Japanese Army during the Second World War to serve as “comfort women”. During that period, hundreds of thousands of women and girls from China, the Korean peninsula, South-East Asia and other countries and regions were forcibly conscripted by the Japanese military as comfort women and became prisoners in hell. They experienced horrific sexual violence, both mentally and physically.

However, to our indignation, for decades, some forces in Japan have stubbornly adhered to misconceptions and kept attempting to deny and whitewash its history of aggression. As recently as last month, some of the textbooks approved by the Japanese Government once again blurred historical facts through word games, attempting to downplay and evade the historical guilt stemming from the forced recruitment of comfort women. We solemnly urge Japan to face up to and reflect on its history of aggression, handle such issues leftover from that history as the forced drafting of comfort women in a responsible manner, bring justice to the victims and survivors and be accountable to the people of the invaded countries, so as not to further undermine the trust of its Asian neighbours and the international community.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Mr. President, thank you for organizing today’s open debate on this crucial issue. The number of speakers by itself speaks of the paramount importance that the States Members of the United Nations accord to this issue.

We were moved by Ms. Murad’s powerful message. We thank her, as well as Ms. Karkoutly and Ms. Berhanu. Again, we thank you, Mr. President, and the United Kingdom team, for bringing these important

voices to our discussion. They testify to how much we need to hear from civil society in the Security Council.

We all know where we have come from on this issue. For a very long time, conflict-related sexual-violence crimes have not been recognized as crimes against humanity or war crimes, and as such were only rarely prosecuted, if at all. Thankfully, in the course of the last three decades, this has changed, but certainly not enough, as atrocities and conflict-related violence based on sexual orientation continues to persist in many parts of the world. Sexual violence continues to be used as a weapon of war and terror to punish civilians, terrorize communities and break up families for the sheer sick choice of perpetrators.

Women are raped, men are tortured, girls are exploited and sold, children are born to raped mothers and end up being excluded by their communities. This is what has happened and is still happening in many theatres of war, from Tigray to Syria, from Myanmar and Afghanistan to Yemen, but not only these countries; the list is much longer.

There is unfortunately a new situation where, as the days go by, we see new gruesome pictures emanating from the darkness of the war in Ukraine, and we hear new chilling testimonies of women and girls raped by the Russian aggressors. Only two days ago, the Executive Director of UN-Women, speaking on the situation of Ukraine, said in this Chamber, “We are increasingly hearing of rape and sexual violence” (see S/PV.9013). It was a stark warning of what is to come.

In a remarkably well-documented investigation, an excellent example of the kind, *The New York Times* tells a part of a story of Bucha, this landscape of horror. The evidence uncovered shows that Russian soldiers not only recklessly and sadistically killed people in revenge for their defeat, but there is more: a woman was held as a sex slave in a cellar before being executed in cold blood. Ukraine’s Ombudsperson speaks about horrific cases of sexual violence involving a group of women and girls who had been kept in a basement of a house for 25 days, and nine of them are unwillingly pregnant now. By committing such despicable crimes and systematically denying them, as we have heard perpetrators do, they are killing twice.

This is the only so-called noble aspect of this war: we know that lies are the backbone of every dictatorship, and Russia has made it its flagship communication tactic. These crimes must not be left

unanswered. Perpetrators are being identified, and they must be prosecuted and convicted.

All parties to conflict, whether they are State or non-State actors, are bound by international law. While in the past sexual violence has often been seen as a by-product of war, it is now recognized as a war crime and a core security challenge. It is outlawed by many international legal frameworks and Security Council resolutions. I therefore wish to echo Special Representative Patten's questions: why is it still so widespread in conflicts from Ukraine to Myanmar, from Afghanistan to South Sudan? Why do some State actors still condone sexual violence as a means of warfare?

The unacceptable and deplorable reality is that despite collective efforts, conflict-related sexual violence goes largely unpunished. We have the law, but there is a lack of proper application of it. We express outrage, but we end up with little action, and this is what must end.

Coming from a region that, in the not-so-distant past, has been the setting for major conflicts and human suffering, we have witnessed how sexual violence was used as a tactic of war against civilians. Sexual violence was a despicable weapon of war, an instrument to humiliate that was widely used in the conflict in Kosovo in 1998 to 1999. This horrible crime has left a profound imprint on survivors and society alike.

While the conflict-related sexual crimes committed in Kosovo have regrettably never been included in the reports of the Secretary-General on sexual violence and their annexes, we commend UN-Women for its work in assisting and training the Kosovo authorities to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases of conflict-related sexual violence and address their legacy by integrating a survivor-centred human rights-based approach, because the voices of more than 20,000 women and girls abused during the conflict in Kosovo must be heard, just as all voices of all survivors of sexual violence anywhere in the world must be heard. In this respect, we commend Special Representative Patten for the publication of the anthology entitled *In Their Own Words: Voices of Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Service-Providers*, which contains 150 powerful and heartbreaking stories of survivors and service-providers. Reading their words, one understands the destructive force and the dehumanizing nature of that horrendous crime. It harms

not just a single individual or a single family or even a single group but negatively affects entire families and communities, erodes social and political stability, and undermines economic progress, as you, Lord Ahmad, rightly put it.

If we want to finally end this universal scourge, we must be able to do more and better, and that is by taking action.

First, we must prioritize prevention, and we can contribute by including the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence when we in the Council design and renew the mandates of peace operations. The deployment of women's protection advisers has proved to be very effective in ensuring more timely, accurate and reliable information regarding conflict-related sexual violence in the field.

Secondly, as everyone agrees, we must improve and strengthen accountability; ensuring accountability by putting an end to impunity for violations and abuses must be our priority. We strongly support the work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict as well as the Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance launched by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Albania welcomes the steps taken by some countries under universal jurisdiction in their national courts and encourage a more coordinated approach among States towards that end. We will be very pleased to follow the Murad code on the collection of evidence, because only evidence can lead to accountability, and accountability helps wounds heal. We in the Council should incorporate sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for targeted sanctions when we cannot do better than that.

The message should be a clear one: no one who has promoted, used or plans to use sexual violence as a tactic of war will escape justice.

Thirdly and finally, we must ensure the effective and secure participation of civil society, as was the case today, in particular women's organizations, in our efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence at all stages, including reparation and rehabilitation. We must protect women activists, including women human rights defenders, journalists and peacebuilders and those working directly on conflict-related sexual violence, from any form of reprisal.

In conclusion, spending time to only condemn such crimes is not an option. We must take concrete action through the entire chain of steps: prevent violence, protect individuals, punish perpetrators and provide redress to victims and survivors. The legal framework has value only if it is implemented. Otherwise, it is just printed paper.

We must use the recent accounts of victims of sexual violence in Ukraine, and anywhere else in the world, as a most urgent wake-up call: no perpetrator should go unpunished — not in Ukraine, not in Yemen, not in Afghanistan, not in Syria, not in Kosovo, not anywhere.

Mr. Flynn (Ireland): Thank you, Mr. President, for having convened today's debate and in particular for bringing to the table such strong voices from civil society. The work that Nadia, Mariana and Hilina do to protect and advocate for survivors of sexual violence is invaluable. I thank them for their courage, courage that we here need to take heed of, as Nadia stated.

I also want to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Patten for her work and that of her team. Her tireless work in documenting those heinous crimes is critical.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2022/272) is brutally clear. Conflict-related sexual violence is rampant, it is going unpunished, and it is destroying lives and communities. It continues to be wielded as an appalling and illegal weapon of war, torture and terrorism. And with widespread impunity the norm, perpetrators are acting without fear of consequence.

We are deeply concerned that sexual violence is increasingly being used to silence women, especially women human rights defenders and those who speak out politically. The horrific reports from Afghanistan and Myanmar are grave testament to that.

The constraining of civil-society space, coupled with misogynistic threats and violence, is not only unacceptable but outright dangerous. Anywhere women cannot participate freely in public life, not only are they deprived of their rights but society is also prevented from reaching its full potential and achieving sustainable peace.

We agree with the Secretary-General that adequate attention is not being paid to prevention. Time and again we have failed to prevent the escalation of sexual violence and to protect survivors. The shocking examples documented from Ethiopia by the joint

United Nations-Ethiopian Human Rights Commission report clearly tell us this. And, as we have just heard from Hilina, these are just a sample of the widespread and systemic use of sexual violence that has defined the conflict in Ethiopia. All parties to that conflict are accused of egregious acts of sexual violence.

We are deeply concerned that this time next year we will be discussing similar testimonies arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, where we have seen enough credible reports to believe that widespread sexual violence is already occurring.

The road map to prevention is clear. There exists a robust framework, including resolutions of the Council, that outlaws conflict-related sexual violence and that can hold perpetrators to account; that prevents future violations; and, importantly, that ensures justice for survivors. The real gap is in implementation. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General put it this morning, what do the resolutions of the Council mean to victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence?

Parties to conflict must have at the forefront of their minds the fact that sexual and gender-based violence can amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Perpetrators must be held accountable. Domestic, regional and international courts all play an essential role in so doing.

For instance, the Bemba and Ongwen convictions by the International Criminal Court (ICC) demonstrated that sexual violence will no longer be treated as a collateral crime. However, as the Secretary-General has highlighted, too few situations, including where widespread conflict-related sexual violence has been reported, have been referred to the ICC by the Council.

In Syria, the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry have played an instrumental role in bridging the accountability gap left by Council inaction. The gathering and preservation of evidence is fundamental for ensuring accountability and has enabled convictions for sexual violence crimes at the domestic level. We saw this recently in the watershed Koblenz proceedings in Germany, as others have referenced.

We also need to ensure that we embed the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in the operational provisions of all mandates agreed by the Council. As recommended by the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, we should integrate women's protection advisers into the budgets of United Nations peace operations, particularly during transition processes.

The use of targeted sanctions on grounds of conflict-related sexual violence is another important — but underutilized — tool at the Council's disposal. Alongside our pursuit of justice, we need to prioritize a survivor-centred approach for all, including men and boys as well as members of the LGBTQI+ community. Access to gender- and age-sensitive services, including sexual and reproductive health services and psychosocial support, is essential.

Many factors exacerbate conflict-related sexual violence. However, the fundamental root cause is inequality. Conflict-related sexual violence is the most horrific abuse of power. It is a shameful scourge that will be ended only when we do the right thing and embrace gender equality.

The Council has made countless commitments to addressing conflict-related sexual violence; now let us implement them.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank all our briefers for their very moving presentations. I reiterate our full support for the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten. I also commend the outstanding commitment of Nadia Murad and, through her, reiterate our gratitude to all those working on the ground to combat the scourge of sexual violence.

Given the situation in Ukraine, which continues to deteriorate, we were appalled to learn of allegations of rape and sexual violence. The increasingly growing number of testimonies are terrifying and must be investigated impartially and independently without delay. Those crimes must not go unpunished.

France condemns in the strongest terms the use of sexual violence as a method or means of war, torture or terror, wherever that may occur. I refer here in particular to the cases of sexual violence observed in Ethiopia, Syria and Yemen, as well as in the Democratic Republic

of the Congo. We condemn any sexist, misogynistic or homophobic discourse that exacerbates that violence.

To prevent sexual violence and bring those responsible to justice, France's action is based on three axes.

First, France is committed to supporting and accompanying victims and survivors. We commend the work of Ms. Murad and Dr. Mukwege in that regard. France is proud to contribute €6.2 million to the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and to be a member of its Board of Directors.

We support the implementation of pilot projects on the ground, in particular in Iraq, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. In Nigeria, we have a pilot project that will support the return to school or training of girls abducted by Boko Haram. Those various initiatives rely on local partners to provide access to medical, physical, psychological and financial reparations.

Despite some commendable progress, we condemn the culture of impunity that persists. We also denounce the reprisals suffered by human rights defenders who are engaged on the issue. We know that while the normative framework is robust, its implementation is essential but remains insufficient. Forty-nine parties are still listed in the annex to the Secretary-General's report (see S/2022/272, annex) and most of them have been for many years.

French courts are taking action. With Sweden, for example, France has formed a team to investigate crimes committed against the Yazidi population in Syria and Iraq. We also reiterate our support for the indispensable role played by the International Criminal Court. In parallel with the fight against impunity, the Security Council must also use all the tools at its disposal, in particular sanctions, which represent a deterrent measure that has not been sufficiently applied to date.

Finally, we must also continue our advocacy and strengthen our commitments. One such example is the launch of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action at the Generation Equality Forum. At the national level, we have also adopted a third action plan on the women and peace and security agenda. At the European level, it is the objective of a conference that will be held in May on the role of women in mediation processes.

We call on all States to renew and strengthen their commitments in that area. Together with the United Nations, we must also raise awareness of the obligations of the parties as well as the rights of the victims. That is the goal of our political and financial support for civil society, whose advocacy work is absolutely essential.

Rest assured that the fight against sexual violence will remain at the heart of France's priorities within the Council. France will ensure the implementation of the resolutions on women and peace and security, as well as the provision of adequate and necessary resources for teams on the ground.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the United Kingdom for convening this timely and necessary debate. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Pramila Patten; Nobel Prize laureate Ms. Nadia Murad; and Ms. Mariana Karkoutly and Ms. Hilina Berhanu for their briefings. Their testimonies compel us to reflect but above all to commit to taking action.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/272) provides an account of the complex scenarios that are frankly devastating, in many cases, in which sexual violence in conflict continues to occur and goes unpunished. Sexual abuse and rape are often used as a weapon of war but pass under the radar. Perpetrators are often repeat offenders and enjoy total impunity, while their victims remain marginalized, besieged by absurd questioning and cumbersome procedures in criminal justice systems that are not designed to serve or understand them, which as we have heard is the case in Syria and Yemen.

Mexico unequivocally condemns all such war crimes and crimes against humanity and joins other in saying that enough is enough. At the United Nations, we need to be more effective and show greater collective commitment against those unacceptable crimes.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, armed groups continue to use sexual violence as a tactic to control natural resources. In Ethiopia, virtually all parties to the conflict have engaged in acts of brutality, including gang rape and the intentional transmission of HIV. In Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Sudan, sexual violence has been perpetrated against political activists demonstrating peacefully.

Despite the normative framework, impunity remains the norm and survivors' access to justice is

the exception. It is true that the underlying causes of sexual violence in conflict cannot be understood in isolation from other factors, such as gender inequality or discrimination, but explaining those issues is not enough to resolve them.

The Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, which Mexico co-chairs with Ireland, held a meeting at the end of last year on sexual violence in conflict, with the participation of women protection advisers deployed in different missions. One of the outcomes of that meeting was a set of specific recommendations of a practical nature that we believe can be very useful. We will soon hold another meeting in order to provide the necessary continuity to our action.

We must seek out approaches to help us find more pragmatic and focused alternatives and simpler procedures. We must give credit to the word of the victims and consider specialized courts with properly trained personnel. We must therefore ensure that justice is expedited and not in a piecemeal way.

Mexico supports the recommendations presented by the Secretary-General in his report and has formulated the following responses, which clearly are in keeping with what we have heard this morning from the briefers.

First, accountability mechanisms must be strengthened with justice systems that have police and experts trained to investigate crimes from a gender perspective.

Second, survivors of sexual violence must be guaranteed access to justice with effective complaint mechanisms, measures for the restitution of functional damages and comprehensive reparation processes.

Third, all cases that national authorities are unable or unwilling to prosecute must be brought before international bodies, including, of course, the International Criminal Court.

Fourth, we must adopt targeted, comprehensive measures for survivors that are designed by survivors and respond to their priorities and needs, including access to sexual and reproductive health services, as well as mental health support.

Fifth, we must respond to the needs of men and boys and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons who are victims of sexual violence in conflict.

Sixth, we must recognize women civil society leaders, peacebuilders and human rights defenders as strategic allies in preventing and responding to sexual violence, ensuring their participation with appropriate protection.

Seventh, we must appoint more women protection advisers in peace operations and in the offices of United Nations Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators.

In conclusion, the prevention of sexual violence begins with ensuring the full and substantive participation of women in the public and political life of their communities. Without that, it is difficult to ensure just, inclusive societies and sustainable peace processes, without which it will be difficult to put an end to the cycle of sexual violence in conflict that we discuss time and again in the Council.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Patten, for preparing the 2021 report (S/2022/272). We also wish to thank the guest briefers.

We are convinced that work to prevent and eradicate violence must be systematic and comprehensive, taking into account the identified causes and origins of this scourge. Focused efforts to combat manifestations of sexual violence must yield long-lasting and sustainable results. In situations of armed conflict, women and children remain the most vulnerable civilians.

We believe that the prevention and combating of sexual violence in all stages of armed conflict and post-conflict situations is first and foremost the responsibility of national Governments. Measures adopted by United Nations entities and civil society should merely supplement the efforts of States.

We are troubled by information provided in the Secretary-General's report about mounting violence against women and girls in conflict areas in Africa, Colombia and Syria. Thousands of people in the Al-Hol and Rukban camps in Syria, which are controlled by the United States occupying authorities, are subjected to violence, exploitation and mistreatment. They are cast aside, are marginalized and are destitute. Prostitution, theft, the sexual exploitation of minors, human trafficking and unequal marriages are rife in the camps.

Today, we yet again heard unsubstantiated, baseless accusations against Russian military personnel carrying out their duties as part of the special military operation in Ukraine. We emphatically reject those insulting and baseless insinuations. We see them as part of the unprincipled information war unleashed against the Russian Federation by Ukraine and its Western patrons. The actions of Russian field units — in combat and outside of it — are subject to strict, unchanging rules for all personnel, regardless of rank or position.

One of the objectives of the smear campaign against Russian military personnel is to cover up real cases of sexual violence by Ukrainian radicals, who have been practicing it against the residents of Donbas since 2014. For years, the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international institutions have been publishing numerous reports of egregious instances of beatings, electric shock being applied to the genital area, threats of rape and forcible nudity against men and women accused of collaborating with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk. The detainees were denied medical assistance and received death threats and threats of a sexual nature against themselves and their families.

It is therefore not surprising that we have noted a sharp upsurge in cases of sexual violence in territories controlled by the Ukrainian Government. We are convinced that such crimes must be emphatically condemned and deserve severe punishment, in contrast to the silence they are often met with in the West.

Today, the actions of the Ukrainian Nazi battalions and so-called territorial defence units are carbon copies of the tactics used by the terrorists of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant — including the use of civilians as human shields and the placement of weapons in residential buildings, schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure. At the same time, the bacchanal of murder and humiliation of Ukrainian citizens suspected of being disloyal to the regime is skyrocketing.

Here are just a few examples.

On 7 March, in the vicinity of the Kommunar coal mine in the Donetsk region, Donetsk People's Republic soldiers who arrived to demine the area discovered a grave containing the bodies of four women. Forensic examination showed that they had been tortured and raped before their deaths. One of the victims was

pregnant. The Aidar Nazi Battalion was based in the area.

On 28 March, Azov Battalion Nazis entered school number 18 in Mariupol and tortured a girl to death. Her mutilated body with severed arms and a swastika branded into her stomach shocked everyone who saw it. We mentioned that tragedy during the 11 April meeting in this Chamber.

On 21 March, nationalists abused Roma women who had fled to western Ukraine by stripping them, dousing them with green dye and tying them to lamp posts, after accusing them of looting.

On 3 April, in the centre of Pavlograd, Dnipropetrovsk oblast, representatives of the Territorial Defence Forces stripped and tied a local woman to a pole. Police officers who observed the incident did not intervene.

Yesterday, however, concerned Ukrainian citizens posted a video online in which police officers publicly beat a woman tied to a pole with a rod, having first humiliated her by stripping her naked.

These are facts that are publicly available and accessible to all — not unsubstantiated allegations. This heinous practice of forced public nudity, violence and punishment is characteristic of medieval Europe and has now, unfortunately, become commonplace in Ukraine.

The conflict in Ukraine has intensified the industry of exploiting Ukrainian refugees in European countries. According to available information, the specialized agencies of the European Union have assessed the vulnerability of Ukrainian refugees to trafficking as being very high, given the fact that in recent years Ukraine has ranked as one of the top five countries in terms of the number of victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Europe. It would be naive to believe that the situation had suddenly changed overnight

We urge our colleagues not to ignore those disturbing trends or the evidence of sexual crimes committed by the Ukrainian military that I mentioned.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): Let me begin by thanking the delegation of the United Kingdom for convening this open debate, which provides the Security Council with the opportunity to sustain its engagement on an issue of great importance to the global community.

I also wish to express our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten and the other briefers for drawing our attention to specific conflict situations in which sexual violence continues to be a concern and the need for action to follow up the commitments made.

Ghana welcomes the emphasis placed in this open debate on accountability as a preventative mechanism against conflict-related sexual violence, as it rightly directs our collective thinking to an essential truth. When an individual sexually violates another, long-lasting, indelible and life-changing wounds are inflicted on the victim, which can be purged only if the perpetrator is held accountable and brought to justice. Without accountability, which is necessary to deter future violence, there is no closure for victims and society is worse off in its efforts to rid itself of the culture of impunity associated with sexual violence.

Through the annual reports of the Secretary-General, we are repeatedly reminded that conflict-related sexual violence comprises actions such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and many other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.

The lengthy list of acts of sexual violence not only paints a horrific picture of the sheer atrociousness of the acts perpetrated in the contexts of conflict but also points to the multifaceted, diverse and extensive nature of acts of sexual violence in conflict.

It is therefore important that we elevate the discussion above the common perception that limits the appreciation of the notion of sexual violence to rape in order to create a broader awareness of the breadth and extent of the menace of sexual violence if we are to succeed in ensuring the operationalization of global norms, including the resolutions of the Council, such as resolution 2467 (2019), as well as other United Nations and international norms concerning the subject.

Whenever sexual violence has been used as a reprisal tool or weapon of war, the path to accountability has often been fraught with enormous challenges. In many cases, survivors are unable to access the help required, owing to systemic or institutional obstacles, the fear of reprisals and stigmatization, and societal norms and cultural perceptions, among other things. In the worst scenarios, help is completely unavailable.

In almost all the conflict situations with which the Council is seized, there are reports of sexual violence in varying degrees. The Council and the global community therefore have a continuing responsibility to ensure that the existing resolutions that champion prevention, accountability and justice are translated into actions that can be felt on the ground.

In making specific recommendations for today's debate, Ghana would like to focus on the following three points.

First, we reaffirm our support for the Council in ensuring that conflict-related sexual violence is treated as a basis for targeted sanctions against culpable actors and that sanctions committees have the requisite expertise on conflict-related sexual violence. Periodic briefings to the committees by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict would be useful in sustaining their focus and reviewing progress on the implementation of such sanctions, as well as the existing challenges.

Member States are also encouraged to actively ensure the development and implementation of domestic legislation that enables the investigation and prosecution of prosecutors of sexual violence in conflict settings in order to redress the wrongs done to their victims.

Secondly, while Ghana commends the commitment demonstrated by the Council to deploy women's protection advisers as part of peacekeeping and special political missions to monitor, analyse and report arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence in the field, we believe that the timely provision of adequate human and financial resources for that purpose will ensure that the Council receives even more frequent, reliable and accurate information from the ground in order to take required action on conflict-related sexual violence.

Thirdly, in order to empower survivors, the United Nations and organizations within Member States, including civil society groups, should show determination in their recruitment of survivors to be part of decision-making processes and advocacy mechanisms on sexual violence in order to meaningfully impact policy, legal processes and implementation.

In that regard, we welcome the announcement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of her appointment of a Global Champion for the Fight

Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. That form of empowerment helps survivors to re-establish a sense of control and agency, as well as to recognize their own strengths and capabilities in resolving the challenge.

In conclusion, it is important to recall that the effects of conflicts on populations are innumerable. Whenever conflicts occur, innocent civilians are often exposed to unspeakable physical, mental, environmental and economic harm, with very little hope for recovery. When sexual violence is introduced into that already toxic cocktail, victims experience agony that most of us could never imagine.

For that reason, inaction and indifference should be considered a real enemy within the Council. As we strive to fulfil our mandate to maintain international peace and security, we owe it to victims, potential victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence all over the world to ensure that our actions ultimately lead to freedom from sexual oppression and accountability for acts of sexual violence.

Mrs. Ngyema Ndong (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for taking the initiative of convening this important debate on accountability as a means of preventing and addressing cycles of sexual violence in conflict.

I thank all the briefers, in particular Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten and Ms. Nadia Murad, for their very informative briefings.

In a global context characterized by a multitude of unprecedented security, humanitarian, economic, political and health crises, today's subject calls on us to consider the fate of civilian populations, in particular women and children, who pay the greatest price in conflict and post-conflict situations of instability.

The adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), supported by a robust number of normative tools, further strengthened the impact of resolution 1325 (2000), especially with regard to the need to end sexual violence in armed conflict. Those resolutions were a turning point in the understanding of sexual violence as a security issue in its own right. It is clear that the great number of conflicts and multifaceted crises are exacerbating that horrible phenomenon, which counts women as its primary victims.

In that regard, the latest report on the issue (S/2022/272) specifically highlights the case of women

peacemakers and human rights defenders, who in precarious and conflict situations are often subjected to sexual abuse, harassment and every form of intimidation to exclude them from public life. That appalling fact requires the international community, in particular the members of the Security Council, to join their efforts to end once and for all the cycles of conflict-related sexual violence.

Under the leadership of President Ali Bongo Ondimba, my country has resolved to place the well-being of women and young people at the centre of its development policy. We acknowledge the immense potential of women with respect to the establishment of security, stability and lasting peace. Consequently, Gabon remains steadfast in its call for accountability for the perpetrators of sexual violence and remains firmly committed to the inclusion and participation of women and building their resilience.

Indeed, the sustained commitment and effective participation of women in conflict prevention and conflict resolution processes, as well as in post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding processes, will allow us not only to achieve lasting peace but also to ensure that decisions on transitional justice processes are fairer and better adapted to the harm suffered by victims and in line with their expectations, while taking into account important contextual factors.

We remain convinced of the need to make greater efforts to facilitate survivors' access to justice and accountability mechanisms in order to provide a holistic response to conflict-related sexual violence. It is also vital to facilitate access to redress, which is a key component in restoring the dignity of those concerned, while advocating a holistic preventive approach that is tailored to situations on the ground. That should be done by using existing means and mechanisms, such as building States' institutional capacity, implementing security sector reform and raising awareness among populations.

My country calls for continued efforts to assist populations and ensure the comprehensive and inclusive implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and its related resolutions, including resolutions 1820 (2008) and 2467 (2019). We also call for the strengthening of the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations, such as the African Union, in particular in coordinating efforts on the women and peace and security agenda. That serves not only to seek appropriate

lasting solutions to conflicts and their adverse effects but also to ensure a broader consideration of the gender dimensions in United Nations peace mission mandates, in particular in conflict or post-conflict situations.

In the same vein, we note with interest the efforts of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network, which integrates the work of 21 United Nations entities in order to prevent conflict-related sexual violence, respond to the needs of survivors and combat impunity.

It is time for the Council to issue a unanimous call to ensure that the victims of sexual violence have access to international justice. It would restore hope, dignity and their fundamental rights. Denying justice to victims is a factor that hinders their recovery.

We firmly believe that in order to better prevent and combat conflict-related sexual violence, we must ground our work in a survivor-centred approach and focus on protecting survivors and building their resilience. By healing the invisible wounds caused by wars and armed conflict and providing victims with the mental health support and psychosocial support they need, we can move with determination towards our shared goal of a peaceful world for current and future generations.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): It is particularly fitting that Lord Ahmad presided over this debate earlier, given his role as his Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. We thank his delegation for bringing this important debate to the Security Council.

I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten and the other briefers for their insights. I thank Ms. Nadia Murad for her extraordinary bravery and determination and service to the Yazidi people, women and all humankind through her work.

Kenya strongly condemns gender-based violence and its manifestation in all contexts and as it takes place in the brutality and inhumanity of the conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, Ethiopia and other wars. War itself is the crime that opens the door to the kinds of war crimes we are discussing today. War, even when it purports the opposite and particularly when it is prolonged, almost inevitably leads to the breakdown of law, order and moral conscience.

We must redouble our efforts to prevent and stop war. We must be rid of the illusions of limited or

precision-guided war, which in the past 20 years have shown their serious limits. We must turn our knowledge and experience of mediation to innovation and boldness of vision in order to stop the current wars.

I thank Hilina Berhanu for her words and recommendations to the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Ghana and Kenya (A3) — and to the African Union. We hear and feel the pain of the Ethiopian people, especially the suffering of the people of Tigray. We urge full cooperation and openness to mediation that enables full humanitarian access, a ceasefire and eventually peace with justice.

In the past year, the A3 has sought to stand with the people of Ethiopia, as brother has taken arms against brother, and we will continue to do so. We have spoken up with strong recommendations. We have embraced the democratic aspirations of the country. We have urged humanitarian access and pushed for the Council's support for African Union and regional mediation. The A3, in the Chamber, once urged for a ceasefire, while observing that there is no lasting victory in crushing one's countrymen and countrywomen. I know that is still the position of the A3. As their neighbours and brothers and sisters, we urge the people of Ethiopia to embrace one another to get beyond the intense suffering and pain that they cause each other and reach for the peace that we all pray and hope for them to achieve.

We are here in search of implementing commitments and existing frameworks. As a country, Kenya has enacted strong laws and policies to combat sexual and gender-based violence. We will champion the efforts in the Chamber and outside it to continue to do so.

Our focus for today is on sexual violence perpetrated by terrorist groups. The Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2022/272) underscores once again how sexual violence continues to be a tactic of war and terrorism. We are concerned that there is too little effort to ensure accountability for sexual violence perpetrated by terrorists.

The Security Council should undertake strong efforts to list those responsible, including their chain of command. It should also call forth cases of sexual violence to be prosecuted in the context of terrorism. That should include the recommendation by Ms. Mariana Karkoutly on sexual violence in prisons. In that regard, we urge that the Security Council take steps to list and sanction administrators of prisons and their chains of

command if their facilities are party to systemic and systematic sexual violence against prisoners.

I will propose three areas of action that I hope will offer further opportunities for practical implementation. First, with regard to Member States' responsibility, States must escalate prosecution for gender-based violence and enhance efforts in preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. All efforts must be taken to address stigmatization, discriminatory laws and other cultural barriers that stand in the way of reporting and accountability.

Such efforts should be reinforced by a gender-responsive and inclusive national security sector and the reforms needed to achieve it. Accountability and prevention demand the localized identification of gaps and that communal infrastructure be operationalized for social awareness and sensitization programmes, as well as the provision of access to justice mechanisms and medical and psychological care for the victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Secondly, on the role of the Security Council, we note that the current report underlines that the series of Council resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence has helped to raise the cost of what has long been perceived as the cheapest and oldest weapon of war. We believe that the bar should be even higher. There is an urgent need to move from commitments to compliance and from resolutions to results. Beyond listings and the incorporation of sexual and gender-based violence as a separate listing criterion in the relevant sanctions regimes, the Security Council should take specific steps and deterrent measures to also increase the costs of acts of conflict-related sexual violence.

The stronger integration of, and investment in the women and peace and security, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism agendas will also contribute to increasing the cost of such atrocities. For example, the implementation of resolution 2242 (2015), which recognizes that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, should be linked to other resolutions that touch on countering terrorism, including resolutions 2354 (2017), 2178 (2014) and 2331 (2016).

Thirdly, on cross-border cooperation, the intersecting elements of rising militarization, coups d'état and conflicts with a transnational character call

for enhanced coordinated action, especially where such contexts lead to increased refugee and internally displaced person situations, with the potential aggravation of conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking.

We call for more effective cross-border coordination among border security personnel, early warning mechanisms, national and regional women protection advisers and humanitarian actors to minimize prevention and reporting gaps, in line with resolution 2467 (2019), which speaks to cross-border dynamics.

Given the importance of cross-border and regional coordination, Kenya supports strategies for advancing the implementation of the mandate and the integration of women and peace and security positions into the United Nations annual budgets of peace operations, particularly during transition processes, in line with resolution 2594 (2021).

In that regard, Kenya looks forward to Special Representative Patten's launch of her report in June. We also look forward to the international adoption of the Murad Code.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

Ms. Ramírez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to especially thank Special Representative Patten for her comprehensive and compelling briefing on the report of the Secretary-General Conflict-related sexual violence before us (S/2022/272). I also particularly welcome the briefing by Ms. Nadia Murad, for whom we all truly have great admiration for her leadership, her work and her capacity to bring people together//convening power. I also warmly thank Ms. Mariana Karkoutly for her briefing, as well as the other briefing and statements delivered.

I would like to say that one need not be a victim of sexual violence in conflict to feel a moral obligation to speak out against such an atrocious crime and one that should be served by//benefit from the strongest institutional capacities, of both States and the multilateral system, in order to sufficiently ensure prevention, as well as punishment and that there is no chance of impunity.

That applies equally to terrorist groups, drug traffickers and criminals, under any circumstances, as well as inter-State conflicts. That message must be convincing on the part of the international community.

No one can claim the right to use the body of any human being as a board wargame or as a theatre to show its supremacy over a competitor. A woman's body is not a board wargame, and the multilateral system must be absolutely unequivocal in that regard.

For my part, as Vice-President of Colombia, I wanted to take up this agenda item, following the leadership of President Iván Duque Márquez, who was here yesterday (see S/PV.9015), to ensure that our country serves as an example regarding everything related prevention and attention to women to achieve genuine gender equality. It was also said quite clearly that frequently the root cause of sexual violence in conflict against women is precisely gender inequality.

The root cause of poverty in many countries is also gender inequality. What we must therefore achieve together is to ensure equal conditions for women and give them full access to a life in which they can harness their abilities and contribute to their countries' economic development.

In Colombia, we therefore give the highest importance to women's economic empowerment as part of our gender policy, which I have been leading since becoming Vice-President because women who are independent economically are much less vulnerable to any kind of violence.

We also know that this is a time when what the entire world is experiencing due to the pandemic and now the economic effects of Russia's war against Ukraine shows us that progress made in overcoming poverty across the world will be undone. Such a setback in terms of poverty means that women need to play a much greater, not a lesser, role in the economy. If 50 per cent of the population, namely, women across the world, enter the labour market as entrepreneurs, become businesswomen and own companies, with the support of States, the entire world would benefit from that human capital, which productively generates wealth and contributes to the creation of jobs.

I say that because the cause of women should be championed not by women alone, but by all humankind and every nation at this particularly difficult time facing us all.

We are therefore truly very pleased to welcome Ms. Pramila Patten briefing us on the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report. I believe that we need to be creative at this time. I also welcome

the additional recommendations very clearly made by the representative of Mexico. In our case in particular, we think that the best way to prevent violence against women, as well as sexual and conflict-related violence against women, is precisely by giving them greater economic independence and by enabling their active participation. They must be heard, like the appeal by Nadia Murad and all the other women who took the floor today. We must support women with much more effective measures within the multilateral system.

In Colombia, we are fully convinced that where the national justice system does not function, international justice must intervene to deal with sexual violence in conflict, as well as outside conflict situations, since we often fall into discussing whether or not it is a situation of armed conflict. What does it matter? What is clear is that there cannot be sexual violence, abusing women's bodies. We see that there are internal conflicts. Some of them are of a religious nature; others are on ethnic grounds. There are inter-State conflicts and those related to drug trafficking. In reality, they all share the common factor of conflict-related sexual violence.

We therefore clearly support the idea that international justice be applied where the national justice system does not function and where there is not the political will for it to do so.

We also believe that all the aforementioned should be supplemented with other recommendations. We are convinced that all the different entities of the United Nations multilateral system — the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Fund, UN-Women — must work together towards the same ends, namely, to prevent sexual violence in conflicts, violence against women in general, and, above all, impunity in these cases of violence. That is why we believe that, beyond international justice, it is also important that the Security Council recommend, for example, that multilateral banks not to grant resources to regimes that perpetrate violence against their citizens, in particular women.

Colombia has proposed that UN-Women create, inter alia, an index of women's economic autonomy. It is necessary for us to take stock in each country of their concrete actions in this area. Based on recommendations set out in the report of the Secretary-General, Colombia has sought to implement the Final Peace Agreement signed with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, as President Iván Duque

Márquez clearly explained to the Council yesterday (see S/PV.9015), through 51 defined trackable indicators, of which 60 per cent have already been fully implemented and their purposes achieved. Significant resources have been dedicated to productive projects for women in some 37 per cent of the cases in which the victims were women. Women have also been the beneficiaries of formal adjudication of hectares of land on which they can undertake their productive projects.

In the case of Colombia, which has suffered so much from drug trafficking, as have other countries — obviously there is no fixed reference — 33,827 people are registered as victims of the crime of sexual violence, out of which 30,546, or 90 per cent, are women, which reaffirms that unfortunately it is most frequently the woman who bears the brunt of this crime. A large part of the reparations is through economic measures, but there is also ample psychological support for women.

In terms of justice, which is a crucial element, I would like to mention that, in Colombia, the Office of the Attorney General has created a body of prosecutors specialized in sexual violence who have the specific training to work on issues of gender violence and to process all the evidence without re-victimizing the woman or, rather, the person — as we also know that unfortunately men can also be victimized — who has suffered this violence.

Among other measures taken in Colombia, President Iván Duque Márquez convened for the first time a National Security Council consultation between the Commander of the Army, with the Director of the National Police, the Attorney General and the Public Defender to analyse the issue of security and the risk of sexual violence against women. Based on that experience, we developed a mechanism that 70 per cent of the municipalities in Colombia are using, whereby representatives of the security forces and prosecutors are working together on related cases and complaints with a view to ensuring that there is no impunity for sexual violence against women.

The Secretary-General's recommendations have therefore been embraced in Colombia, and, as I said before, my country, on its own initiative, have achieved many of their underlying objectives. But it is very important for us that these recommendations be reinforced by the Security Council with its own recommendation that credits not be granted to those countries that fail to adopt robust agendas aimed at

guaranteeing gender equity and ending violence against women, especially violence in conflict.

The participation of women in public security and law enforcement is very important. We are committed to promoting greater participation of women both as high-ranking officers and as uniformed soldiers. It was very painful to hear from the briefings this morning that women soldiers themselves are sometimes the protagonists of this type of violence, for it is humiliating that unvalidated men should perpetrate any type of sexual violence against others during a conflict.

The report of the Secretary-General refers to 18 countries. I am afraid that there are many more countries that are not included in the report, as we constantly see cases in which sexual violence is used by one group to dominate another or to diminish the capacity for action or undermine the will of certain sectors of the population as a way to force them to go in a certain direction. This work is therefore very important. We are very grateful for it. Colombia offers its full cooperation in all efforts to address these issues. We have been developing our own initiatives with a view to, *inter alia*, bring justice to remote rural areas, so that it is justice that goes to women where they live and that it does not wait for the day when women can leave their homes to seek justice.

I thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership in this area, and emphasize Colombia's commitment to working tirelessly on these issues, not only in the context of implementing the Final Peace Agreement in relation to the conflict in my country, but because voices on this issue should never be silenced.

The President: I thank Her Excellency Ms. Ramírez for her statement.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on the United Kingdom's presidency of the Security Council for the month of April, and thank you for convening this timely meeting to discuss conflict-related sexual violence.

I would like to thank the briefers for their invaluable service to the cause of combating conflict-related sexual violence and their contribution to the debate today.

The coronavirus disease has exacerbated violence against women and girls, especially in conflict situations. Conflict-related sexual violence is a tactic often used to target civilians, inflicting long-term trauma and humiliation, fracturing families, destroying the social fabric, triggering displacement and fuelling armed actors' activities. Throughout the years, the role of peacekeeping missions has evolved and been modernized to adapt to new emerging challenges, such as conflict-related sexual violence.

A coordinated and comprehensive approach across civilian, military and police components, from the strategic to operational levels, is critical to peacekeeping missions to effectively prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence in the performance of their mandates. Training, mainstreaming policies against conflict-related sexual violence, enhancing, monitoring and reporting mechanisms and advocacy and raising awareness are crucial elements in any successful strategy to combat conflict-related sexual violence.

As a host country to 2 million refugees, Jordan has seen its already-scarce resources strained. Nonetheless through its response plan, we have carried out numerous outreach activities with the objective of raising awareness, particularly among young people, to change social norms and promote gender equality with a particular focus on preventing child marriage and ending sexual and gender-based violence. In addition, Jordan's Youth Peace and Security 2250 National Coalition has collaborated with the United Nations Population Fund to organize an online interactive session to mobilize young people and representatives of youth organizations and networks on conflict-related sexual violence and to discuss the impact of sexual violence on the lives of young people and their communities, as well as effective tools to combat the phenomenon.

Gender-responsive security sector reforms remain crucial for the fulfilment of our mission to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence. As part of Jordan's national action plan, we have managed to integrate gender-responsive training into the security sector.

We must ensure that existing United Nations, international and national mechanisms to combat sexual violence are supported and provided with the resources needed to support survivors and prevent future tragedies.

Perpetrators of violence, whether State or non-State actors, must also be held responsible for their acts. States should harmonize their legislation to criminalize conflict-related sexual violence under their national laws and remove any procedural impediments to the prosecution of the crimes, including forms of immunity such as immunity *ratione materiae*. Conflict-related sexual violence must not be seen as an inevitable by-product of the process. The effective implementation of criminal accountability and international responsibility is an important deterrent from the commission of the crimes.

The well-being of survivors should be our focus in efforts to reducing and preventing sexual violence. Ensuring equal access to medical care and psychological support for all sexual violence survivors during conflict and in post-conflict situations is an integral part of the process.

Now is the moment to enhance our joint efforts to eliminate sexual violence in conflict. We have a second chance to reset the rhythm in our endeavours to end conflicts around the world and build back better for our future generations, where every individual around the world would be able to realize their full potential.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malta.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I begin by thanking the United Kingdom for organizing this open debate and today's briefers for enriching the discussion with their personal experiences and insights.

Malta aligns itself with the statements to be delivered on behalf of the European Union; the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security; and the LGBTI Core Group, and would like to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

Sexual violence and rape are terrifying weapons of war, aimed at humiliating and stigmatizing helpless civilians. As members of the international community, we must strive to prevent these crimes, redouble our efforts to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure that we support survivors. We must reject the notion that sexual violence and rape are unfortunate but inevitable consequences of war. They are not. They are war crimes. They are a breach of international law and must be treated as such.

In Ukraine, reports of rape continue to increase. Several women and girls have recounted the sexual

violence and abuse that they have suffered at the hands of Russian soldiers. I commend the courage of the many women who are sharing their chilling accounts of rape and other forms of sexual violence. What we are hearing by word of mouth, especially from survivors, is horrific. We cannot be silent in the face of such atrocities, nor can we forget what has happened and continues to happen in other parts of the world — in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Libya and other places. Malta is concerned that children, particularly girls, are vulnerable to sexual violence at or on their way to school. We call on all parties to conflict to end and prevent sexual violence against children.

Conflict-related sexual violence is equally traumatizing yet different in nuance for women, girls, men, boys and people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics. Justice and accountability must be crucial parts of our response, and more awareness is needed to promote accountability. Survivors must be kept at the centre of our efforts. They must have access to resources to counter the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they face, while a more gendered psychological and medical support should be ensured. Special Representative Patten has once again pointed to the fear and stigma that survivors face. Malta fully supports the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and commends the important work of her Office.

It is equally important for women and girls in all their diversity to enjoy full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making, as outlined in resolution 1325 (2000). Providing all survivors with access to a holistic model of care, covering medical, psychological, legal and socioeconomic needs, is a concrete way to empower women towards demanding their rights and creating change, both within their countries and globally.

There can be no impunity for those who violate human rights law and international humanitarian law. The International Criminal Court can contribute to the fight against conflict-related sexual violence by developing and consolidating a gender-responsive legal framework and jurisprudence. The capacity of Governments, judiciary, police, military and civil society should be further built to gather evidence and strengthen prosecutions. Training for military and police personnel, peacekeepers, grass-roots

organizations and human rights defenders on sexual violence issues remains essential.

In conclusion, by adopting a holistic approach, we need to save and protect, but we also hope that victims, given all the support for their recovery, will be transformed into empowered survivors and agents of change within their communities.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rae (Canada): I speak on behalf of 64 States members of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Our group is profoundly concerned by the persistent and widespread use of sexual violence with impunity by State and non-State actors in a great many conflicts around the world. The list of such conflicts is long and has been cited by several speakers and in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/272). I think it important that we bear them all in mind.

I appreciate the comments made by my colleague from Malta with respect to the situation in Ukraine. We need to understand that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has spoken of possible war crimes, breaches of international humanitarian law and serious violations of international human rights law. We strongly support the Secretary-General's call for an immediate, independent investigation of the conduct of all those involved in the conflict.

We call on all parties in all conflict situations to immediately cease all forms of sexual violence, consistent with international law and resolutions of the Security Council. Those responsible for such heinous acts must be held to account by national justice or, where that is not possible, international justice.

Regrettably, for many victims and survivors, access to justice, remedies and reparation is non-existent or painfully slow. United Nations Member States must fight impunity by strengthening the rule of law. Our group strongly encourages the Security Council to incorporate and apply sexual violence as a designation criterion in United Nations sanction regimes.

We must redouble our efforts to dismantle all structural and institutional barriers that hinder survivors from safely reporting sexual violence and from accessing essential services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, victim advocacy,

mental health and psychosocial support, and legal services. We also reiterate the importance of ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, as has been agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action. We call on all parties to ensure a safe and enabling environment for civil society, including women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders, to carry out their important work, free of intimidation, violence or reprisals.

Member States must invest in tackling the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence. Prevention starts, we believe, with a commitment, first and foremost, to gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls in diverse situations and conditions, the protection and promotion of human rights, and women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making. We encourage the Council to ensure that country mandates emphasize the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence and strengthen early warning systems through the deployment of women's protection advisors.

Finally, it is critical that survivors remain at the heart of all our efforts. We must recognize that survivors have different needs and may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. We must ensure that their rights are protected, that they are treated with dignity, that they are able to obtain access to justice, and that they can safely, fully and meaningfully participate in decision-making at all levels.

(spoke in French)

Allow me to also say a few brief words on Canada's behalf.

We are convinced that we must continue to support the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Where the Court lacks jurisdiction, we will continue to explore alternative ways of ensuring accountability for these crimes.

The experiences of all survivors, including the LGBTI community, remind us of the need to do one, simple thing — listen. Our work is to support them in rebuilding their lives, restoring their dignity and to find justice.

(spoke in English)

I had the opportunity to serve as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to Myanmar and to Bangladesh. I came to the camp in Cox's Bazar three or four weeks after the forcible deportation of nearly a million people, most of them women and girls. I had the opportunity to speak to a great many women who had been the victims of sexual violence. Sexual violence is not about sex; it is about power, violence and the abuse of patriarchal power.

The stories that I heard have been repeated and, fortunately, victims have been able to tell them to a great

many people who have gathered evidence, are gathering evidence and are presenting that evidence. Tragically, this experience is going to have to be repeated in country after country after country. We have to take every possible step to stop this terrible abuse.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.30 p.m.