



# Security Council

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New York

*President:* Ms. Alghali . . . . . (Sierra Leone)

*Members:*

Algeria . . . . .	Ms. Samai/Mr. Koudri
China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. De La Gasca
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Slovenia . . . . .	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America . . . . .	Ms. Carty

## Agenda

### Women and peace and security

Sustaining woman and peace and security commitments in the context of accelerated drawdowns of peace operations

Identical letters dated 30 July 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2024/573)

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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**

#### **Sustaining women and peace and security commitments in the context of accelerated drawdowns of peace operations**

#### **Identical letters dated 30 July 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2024/573)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; and Ms. Kholood Khair, Founding Director of Confluence Advisory.

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/2024/573, which contains the text of identical letters dated 30 July 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bahous.

**Ms. Bahous:** I thank you, Madam President, for inviting me to this important debate.

The past quarter of a century has seen the Security Council acknowledge the centrality of gender equality to peace in decision after decision. It does so because the evidence is clear and uncontested: gender equality supports conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery, while gender inequality makes conflict more likely and peace less durable. Gender equality is thus at the heart of the United Nations peace and security apparatus and of peacekeeping.

The United Nations peacekeeping efforts, led and guided by the Council, have a proud history of contributing to avoiding renewed militarization in post-conflict societies. Part of that history has also been a contribution to gender equality. For example, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has helped to relocate many women human rights defenders to safer locations in recent years, facilitated women's representation in local community dialogues in the peace process, reaching 30 and 40 per cent in several localities, and contributed to the conviction of dozens of members of armed groups and security forces for conflict-related sexual violence. Special political missions too have played an important role in achieving the modest but steady gains that we have seen across countries in crisis on women's political participation and representation, even in the most challenging contexts. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia has been one of the most consistent supporters of the political aspirations of Somali women as they fight for better representation through quotas and changes in the electoral code.

UN-Women is concerned about the potential effects of multiple recent decisions to shrink or close both peacekeeping and special political missions. Those decisions are being made even as the number and intensity of conflicts and insecurity grow. It is counter-intuitive that, in the face of unprecedented levels of conflict and violence, the number of deployed peacekeeping personnel worldwide has dropped by almost half, from 121,000 in 2016 to approximately 71,000 in 2024. That is taking place against a backdrop of growing misogyny and violence against women and girls. It is apparent in the wars we see and the wars we fear and the clear disregard in their conduct for the lives, welfare, rights and autonomy of women and girls. I would like to thank Sierra Leone for proposing this debate, for providing the space for this crucial discussion and for affording us, as UN-Women, the opportunity to share our perspective.

In the final months of 15 consecutive years of United Nations peacekeeping in Haiti, the Security Council heard from the Executive Director of one of Haiti's largest non-governmental health-care providers and social justice organizations (see S/PV.8502). She asked the Security Council to ensure that in the event of a mission transition or drawdown the gains made on gender equality would be protected, including by

providing the necessary resources — a reasonable request very much in line with the Security Council's stated priorities.

That was in April 2019. Ten months later, the peacekeepers had left. Another civil society representative of Haitian women came to brief the Council (see S/PV.8729). She told the Council about armed gangs that were raping women and filming and posting the rapes on social media. She explained that gang rape was becoming a political weapon, a premeditated and explicit expression of defiance of law enforcement. She said that entire areas were controlled by armed gangs that were better armed and equipped than the police. She spoke of kidnappings, of terrified students unable to go outside, and of courts in the capital that had been closed since the peacekeeping missions had left. That was four and a half years ago, and the reality she described is very much a reality today. Almost 5,000 cases of rape were reported to case managers and service providers in Haiti in 2023, with the numbers of homicides, kidnappings and incidents of sexual violence rising every year and showing no signs of slowing down.

Around the same time, at the annual debate on women and peace and security in 2019 (see S/PV.8649), a young activist from the Sudan who had become an icon of that year's revolution told the Security Council that women had already been sidelined in the political process in the months following the revolution. She shared her scepticism as to whether the promised 40 per cent quota for women in the transitional legislative council would ever materialize. Among other things, she asked the Security Council to halt the scaling down of the peacekeeping mission until the security situation was more stable and the protection of civilians more assured. Yet despite those warnings, a year later the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur was closed. And so today in the Sudan, with no peacekeeping or political mission in place, famine is imminent, and thousands of new mothers could die in the next few months. All of that is going on as women and girls are being subjected to all kinds of cruelties and violence, which I believe the Council members are well aware of.

The Council's resolutions have been clear. Resolution 2594 (2021) called for comprehensive gender analysis and expertise to inform any United Nations transition from the outset, for women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all the sequenced stages of

the mission and the transition and for the gains made in the areas of gender equality and women and peace and security to be sustained. It did so in recognition of the fact that such efforts save lives, empower women and protect them from harm. Those direct instructions were built on years of similar language in other Security Council decisions and United Nations policy and guidance. Despite that, the directives are often not put into practice. That is why UN-Women is acutely concerned about the current trend closing off space and support for United Nations missions in ways that are too precipitous to allow for women's proper involvement or the prioritization of gender equality. To take the example of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the short time allowed to close the Mission meant that none of the work on women and peace and security or of gender advisers and officers could be transferred to State authorities or the United Nations country team. That is just one example.

For more than six years, UN-Women has been working closely with the Department of Peace Operations to strengthen the gender responsiveness of United Nations transitions, from work on agreed minimum requirements to joint analysis, planning and capacity-building, engaging with national partners and co-locating staff and sharing assets. In that period, we have identified many gaps. I will highlight three today.

First, women and gender-equality issues more broadly are often underrepresented in or absent from negotiations with host countries over mission drawdowns and departures. In some cases, women and women's groups are mentioned only as victims in need of protection rather than as partners in a transition, including the many women's rights organizations that could inherit crucial functions of the departing mission if given adequate support. Women are also excluded from decisions about security matters and security architecture.

Secondly, gender-responsive conflict analysis is often left out of planning exercises at the outset and undertaken only later, with resources for which funds must be raised separately or by repurposing flexible funding from UN-Women.

Thirdly, the money spent on United Nations missions is not reallocated to peacebuilding or sustainable development once they leave, whether through the United Nations country team or other

national partners. As soon as the United Nations experiences a sharp drop in budgets and presence, gender expertise and programming are all too often the first areas to be deprioritized. In order to address those concerns, I would like to offer three solutions.

First, we recommend that the Council ensure that United Nations transitions safeguard gender-equality gains and women's meaningful participation in every possible way. That includes acting routinely through decisions and statements and in interactions with host Governments and any regional or subregional organizations giving peacekeeping support.

Secondly, the Council should continue to invite women from civil society to routinely brief it and provide analysis of their contexts from a gendered perspective. The Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security should also conduct field visits to countries after the departure of a United Nations mission in order to monitor and report on the situation of women and girls, so that such analysis can be included in decision-making.

Thirdly, we recommend that the Security Council pay more attention to financing. The role of the Peacebuilding Fund is essential to that, as is stronger collaboration with international financial institutions. In addition, all drawdowns should include plans to allocate sufficient resources to work on the women and peace and security agenda so as to sustain the gains made.

In some cases, accelerated mission departures are ultimately based only on political timetables and do not fully reflect the realities on the ground. We believe that the Security Council and international partners have the capacity to engage host Governments in order to prevent such hurried transitions, particularly in the interests of protecting the rights of women and girls. We cannot allow the tools that the Council has carefully crafted over decades to advance the women and peace and security agenda to be discarded. They are too valuable and too crucial to women and girls. We fear a future of increasing atrocities against women, their ever-greater marginalization in decision-making and ultimately a failure of the international community. That prospect should be unacceptable to all of us, and I am confident that it is.

We have an opportunity this fall with the Summit of the Future, and next year as we mark the 30 years that have passed since the Beijing Declaration and

Platform for Action to double down on efforts to advance women's rights and bolster the commitments made in Beijing, Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the many Council resolutions on women and peace and security. UN-Women will remain at the Council's side as we work collectively in the service of its consistent decisions for women and peace and security.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Bahous for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Pobee.

**Ms. Pobee:** I am most grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate, and I join my colleague, the Executive Director of UN-Women, in expressing my appreciation to Sierra Leone for bringing this issue to the fore.

Consolidating peace dividends and gains is one of the fundamental concerns and objectives during the transitions and drawdowns of peace operations. A key area where gains must be preserved is that of women and peace and security, in line with our shared commitments under resolution 1325 (2000). Indeed, as indicated by the Executive Director, peace operations have become instrumental in facilitating and promoting women's leadership and agency, ensuring women's meaningful participation in political and peace processes, and protecting women and girls from human rights abuses and violations.

Missions' transitions present challenges but also opportunities for stakeholders to consolidate gains in those critical areas and to sustain peace. Since 2014, the United Nations has managed at least 10 transitions in politically and operationally complex settings. In the past few years, United Nations peace operations have drawn down at an accelerated pace from Mali and the Sudan. A phased disengagement from the Democratic Republic of the Congo is under way. In all those transition settings, the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda has proved to be challenging.

Rushing through a transition process against a background of a tense political climate, persisting security threats and protection concerns, can jeopardize hard-won peace gains, including progress on gender equality. Indeed, national stakeholders could be unprepared to shoulder additional responsibilities, while support from international partners may not be readily available. Unless transitions are well-structured, adequately resourced and gender-responsive, women

and girls will be at risk of setbacks. Those could include losing access to essential services, being excluded from new decision-making processes and becoming vulnerable to waves of fresh violence and insecurity, including conflict-related sexual violence. Permit me to share a few examples.

In Mali, prior to the accelerated withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), women accounted for 38 per cent of the membership of the Agreement Monitoring Committee. That was transformative and helped to enhance women's political participation. The drawdown of MINUSMA, however, has negatively impacted peacebuilding programmes focusing on women and girls and on sustaining the gains made in the political sphere.

The recent departures of peace operations from key hotspots in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have led to security vacuums, leaving women and girls exposed to attacks by armed actors. Those drawdowns have also diminished the capacity of the United Nations to support stakeholders in addressing conflict-related sexual violence altogether in specific areas, including investigation, reporting and assistance to survivors. That is particularly concerning as the establishment of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence is a key request made by the Security Council.

Other challenges relate to limited funding, capacities and capabilities towards the implementation of existing national action plans on 1325 (2000) and which should be a priority throughout the life of the mission, during transitions and post-drawdown.

To achieve more successful transitions, a forward-looking approach rooted on joint planning — involving national authorities, local civil society organizations, the United Nations peace operations and the country team, international partners and Council members — is vital. Establishing a shared vision on women and peace and security can help prioritize United Nations support and direct capacity and resources in the right direction. In that regard, the Peacebuilding Fund can play a crucial role by providing flexible and targeted funding to address gaps and sustain gender equality and women's empowerment during critical transition periods. For instance, in Liberia, before and since the departure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia in 2018, the Fund has supported increased women's participation

in conflict prevention and resolution, strengthened women's engagement in public spheres and political processes and improved gender mainstreaming in the security and justice sectors.

In Guinea-Bissau, during the transition of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau in 2020, the Government endorsed a common conflict analysis and peacebuilding priorities. They mainstreamed gender equality and promoted the empowerment and effective representation of women in political dialogue and in peacebuilding and development processes.

In the Sudan, during the transition from the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur to the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan in 2020 and 2021, a capacity mapping led to a significant enhancement of gender expertise in the mission and the mainstreaming of gender equality priorities in programmatic work.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a multiplicity of measures in 2020 and 2021 have had some impact. Those measures included gender conflict analysis, the integration of gender and women and peace and security in several benchmarks and indicators and joint mission assessments on progress, including the transfer of mission tasks to UN-Women in South Kivu. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) continues to work, in collaboration with the country team, on a new joint justice programme to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo State institutions in the prevention, investigation, prosecution and adjudication of serious crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence and other crimes. In anticipation of the next phases of the disengagement, MONUSCO is also coordinating with the country team on the continuation of adequate follow-on arrangements on legacy issues, including accountability and victims' support related to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.

In all ongoing and upcoming transitions — whether in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq or Somalia, we must act early to ensure our planning, coordination and engagement with partners addresses the full range of women and peace and security work. United Nations peace operations and country teams, national Governments, regional organizations and civil society partners and women networks need to specifically ensure that: first, gender analysis is part



of transition processes from inception to completion; and secondly, necessary gender expertise, capacity and resources exist to sustain gains. Furthermore, the Security Council, during its periodic visits to missions, must systematically engage with national authorities and partners on the women and peace and security agenda, particularly in transition contexts.

We must continue to do our utmost to support and enable women and girls to take their rightful place in their communities and to shape in equal measure the destinies of their country.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Pobee for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Khair.

**Ms. Khair:** I thank the members of the Security Council for the opportunity to brief them today on the impact of the transitions of United Nations peace operations on women's rights and participation.

My name is Kholood Khair, and I am the founder and director of Confluence Advisory, a think-and-do tank formerly based in Khartoum. I will focus my remarks on my country, the Sudan, which I believe can offer important lessons to the Council on this topic.

Nearly two decades ago, in the face of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, the Security Council made the important decision to establish the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Though local rights groups reported some protection concerns during UNAMID's tenure, the mission was instrumental in providing a degree of stability in Darfur when it was clear that the Government was unable, but mostly unwilling, to end the violence it wrought against the non-Arab populations there. UNAMID acted as a protective wedge between civilians and the Government forces and allied militias that were targeting them.

Frankly, as a Sudanese woman, I believe the timing of UNAMID's withdrawal in 2020 was a massive miscalculation, especially as it took place before any alternative national force could be set up in its stead. The result was a gaping protection vacuum. Consequently, violence in Darfur spiked markedly. The Juba Peace Agreement, which was seen to reward one set of political actors over another, fanned the ethnic flames in West Darfur even further. In January 2021, just a month after UNAMID's withdrawal was complete, women displaced by the violence told reporters that they faced either rape or death, from violence and hunger.

When the military-led transitional Government finally struck a deal with the Juba Peace Agreement signatories to set up the joint forces, Darfur's traumatized population was dismayed to find that those forces were made up in part of the very same groups that had been terrorizing them and displacing them from their homes, namely, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which had led the atrocities in Darfur decades earlier. In particular, RSF members were implicated in attacks in El Geneina in December 2019 and again in January 2021, shortly after UNAMID closed some of its bases there. Throughout that, women's rights activists implored the international community to let UNAMID stay, but their voices were ignored.

Similarly, the limited mandate given to the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and its hasty termination at the request of the de facto Sudanese authorities in December 2023, represented another instance where the perspectives and needs of Sudanese women were not considered by the Council. Even now, in the wake of UNITAMS departure, and despite rampant reports of sexual violence, the United Nations has not established adequate monitoring and reporting arrangements.

Today, with an all-out war raging across the Sudan and reports of unfolding genocide, the situation for Sudanese people is desperate. There are likely far more than the reported 18,000 civilians killed since the outbreak of conflict in April 2023. In El Geneina alone, up to 15,000 were killed during the RSF's siege. Since then, the RSF has launched similar attacks in El Fasher city and Gezira and Sennar states. As of July, almost 25 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, almost 11 million are internally displaced and more than half the population are facing acute hunger. Yesterday, the Council heard that there is famine in North Darfur, particularly in internally displaced persons camps such as Zamzam, which was also bombarded by the SAF. Reports from the ground suggest that at least 13 other areas face famine conditions. The obstruction of humanitarian aid and the bombardment of hospitals by both parties further threaten more lives. Unimpeded humanitarian access and the protection of all humanitarian actors are essential.

Despite the urgent need, there is currently no entity that has a protection of civilians mandate in the Sudan, beyond the de facto authorities, which have again proven

themselves unable and unwilling to do so. That leaves the vast majority of Sudanese people entirely exposed during the ongoing conflict and vulnerable to atrocities committed by the RSF, the SAF and allied militias.

As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten noted following her recent visit to Chad, that war is being waged on the bodies of women and girls. Widespread and systematic conflict-related sexual violence is no longer limited to Darfur, but reported across the country, including in Khartoum and Gezira. It is clear that the RSF and the SAF have subjected women and girls from ages 9 to 60 to sexual violence — a war crime — and neither party has taken meaningful steps to prevent its forces from committing rape and attacking health workers or to investigate such crimes. The deliberate use of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage, chiefly by the RSF, compounded by atrocities such as looting, torture, forced disappearances and forced labour, is aimed at terrorizing the population into submission. Further, recent reports have emerged that women in the city of Omdurman are being coerced into sex with soldiers from the Sudanese army as the only way to access food or other necessary goods. We are confronting a serious protection crisis and an epidemic of gender-based violence across the country.

For nearly 25 years, the Security Council has pledged its commitment to the women and peace and security agenda and to uphold women's rights in all conflicts and crises. Yet what we are witnessing in the Sudan today is a blatant violation of those obligations, and a key contributing factor is the lack of a robust protection of civilians mission.

There is currently no body in-country to adequately monitor human rights, no body to effectively protect civilians and no body to sufficiently support women, who have so far been almost entirely excluded from participating in any aspect of resolving the current crisis, despite being on the front lines of the response. There were no minimum conditions established prior to the termination of first UNAMID, then UNITAMS, to mitigate the harms to women and girls or to ensure that there were adequate resources to address their needs. Therefore, women and marginalized groups are paying the price for that protection vacuum.

In order to address the urgent protection crisis in the Sudan, I offer the following recommendations.

First, while the international community's efforts to secure a ceasefire are critical, the need of the hour is to prevent genocide and save lives. A complementary diplomatic track must be established separate to ceasefire talks that is focused on addressing violence against civilians, with targeted measures for the protection of women and girls, including from conflict-related sexual violence. Concerningly, United Nations-led mediation efforts have thus far failed to implement the United Nations own long-standing guidance on addressing conflict-related sexual violence in negotiating ceasefires and peace agreements.

Secondly, the physical protection of civilians, including women and girls, must be paramount to international action. In line with resolution 2736 (2024), the United Nations Secretariat must, alongside the African Union, urgently identify options for civilian protection, and while those options are being developed, must do all it can to protect civilians from atrocity crimes, including through tried-and-tested community protection initiatives to monitor any commitments by the warring parties not to target civilians, conduct rapid investigations and contribute to peace negotiations.

Thirdly, women's rights must be prioritized in response to the current crisis. Expanding the arms embargo across the country and adding conflict-related sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for targeted individual sanctions would address the fact that the flow of arms is exposing women and girls to horrific forms of gender-based violence.

Finally, it is critical, in accordance with resolution 2736 (2024), that the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women be ensured, not as an addendum to the main talks but as central to them, by Personal Envoy Lamamra, the African Union, the League of Arab States and any other actors working to advance a peace process.

Additionally, the grave situation in the Sudan offers important lessons for drawdowns, transitions and terminations in other contexts where women's lives are at stake. The Security Council must do more to implement resolution 2594 (2021) on transitions in other situations on its agenda, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Somalia. Most importantly, it must ensure that there are no protection gaps between a hasty withdrawal and a new mission or termination and handover to government authorities. Assurances that relevant authorities have taken up

a protection mandate are a must before any peace operation fully withdraws, and the protection of women's rights and of civilians must be essential in any handover, including by clearly identifying benchmarks for protection, collecting reliable data on conflict-related sexual violence and inculcating women and peace and security norms into legal frameworks before withdrawal. Integrating gender and human rights expertise, as well as meaningful consultation with women and civil society organizations at all stages of transition planning is essential.

It is at moments of transition that the United Nations often serves its highest purpose by providing basic needs and security for civilians at risk. Though the pursuit of a ceasefire in the Sudan is necessary, a ceasefire alone will not save lives. The best way to accomplish that is through a mission to protect civilians. Twenty years ago, the Security Council saw the war in the Sudan for what it was — a war on civilians — and chose to prioritize saving lives. I urge Council members to do so once more, before it is too late.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Khair for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Let me start by thanking Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, and Ms. Martha Pobe, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, for their comprehensive and insightful briefings. I also thank Ms. Kholood Khair, Founding Director of Confluence Advisory, for the information provided.

The importance of women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation as active agents in peace and security processes remains a priority for Sierra Leone. The landmark adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) in the year 2000 led to the global community's manifest recognition of the differential burden that women and girls bear during conflict situations and of the vital role that women play in conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution. The women and peace and security agenda is therefore a vital tool to recognize and uphold women's right to full participation and protection and their right to benefit from violence prevention and gender-sensitive relief and recovery.

Sierra Leone convened this meeting because we are concerned about the seeming lack of trust in the engagements between United Nations missions and host countries and the impact that that lack of trust will surely have on the rights of women and girls. We think that that sense of alarm has been expressed clearly in the statements of the briefers today. The women and peace and security agenda, a cornerstone of our collective commitment to gender equality and conflict prevention, must not be compromised in the face of operational adjustments. On the contrary, it must be fortified and integrated into every phase of peacekeeping and peace support operations and political missions, including withdrawals and drawdowns.

There exist examples of situations in which adverse consequences for women and girls are due to the absence of robust women and peace and security frameworks during transitions. Women and girls are often disproportionately affected by renewed violence, limited access to justice and exclusion from peacebuilding processes. Such setbacks undermine the hard-won gains made through years of conflict resolution, peace support and peacekeeping efforts.

In the Sudan, as we have heard from Ms. Khair, the current catastrophic conflict is imposing an even more devastating impact on women and girls. The gains that were being made towards democracy and stability have been reversed. With the closure of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan, for instance, we in Sierra Leone can relate to the severe risk of reversal in sustaining the women and peace and security commitments in such situations.

It is in that context that we share our story, as we call for orderly and responsible withdrawals or drawdowns of peace support and peacekeeping operations. Sierra Leone experienced a decade of civil conflict from 1991 to 2000. In the immediate aftermath of the civil conflict, the peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), had a gradual drawdown. From its peak of 17,500 troops, the Mission's strength went down to 13,000 by June 2003 and subsequently to approximately 5,000 troops by late 2004. Undoubtedly, the drawdown was predicated on Sierra Leone's ability to assume security responsibilities in areas being vacated by UNAMSIL.

The transition from UNAMSIL to the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) was well planned and carried out without major obstacles.



The Government of Sierra Leone and all concerned national stakeholders, including women's and youth groups and international partners, were consulted on the establishment of the Office. An effective public information campaign conducted by UNAMSIL and later by UNIOSIL prepared the population for the departure of UNAMSIL and for the role that the United Nations would continue to play. As a result, UNIOSIL was fully accepted by all stakeholders.

The transition from UNIOSIL to the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) proceeded as planned, with extensive consultations between United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, culminating in the adoption of the Joint Vision of the United Nations family for Sierra Leone. In pursuit of that vision, UNIPSIL organized, in collaboration with the relevant government agencies, a national consultative forum on the integration of human rights into the curriculum of secondary schools in Sierra Leone. Additionally, UNIPSIL, in collaboration with the then-Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, developed a plan relating to the acts on gender justice and increased sensitization on women's rights throughout the country.

It is interesting to note that, in order to follow through with that effort, institutions such as the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police and a separate Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs have been established, and continued efforts have been made to strengthen the legal framework to protect and empower women and girls. Those efforts include the passing of the Domestic Violence Act to combat domestic violence, the Devolution of Estates Act to ensure equity and equality in inheritance rules, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act to provide the necessary legal protection, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act and the recently enacted Child Marriage Act, which prohibits child marriage in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone has also undertaken the reform of non-gender-specific laws to ensure the provision and protection of political and socioeconomic rights and the empowerment of women, which have enhanced the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

In view of the foregoing, it is imperative that the withdrawals and drawdowns of United Nations missions are orderly and responsible. Where they become necessary, withdrawals and drawdowns must not result in a regression of the significant gains that

have been made in gender equality and the protection of women's rights. Accordingly, we will make the following observations.

First, we must ensure that women are at the forefront of peacebuilding efforts. Their inclusion in peace processes is not merely a matter of equity, it is a necessity for sustainable peace. Evidence shows that peace agreements are more durable when women are involved in negotiating and implementing them. Therefore, as peacekeeping missions transition, we must support women's groups and networks in assuming active roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Secondly, the protection of women and girls from violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, must remain a priority. Peacekeeping missions often serve as critical mechanisms for protecting vulnerable populations. As those missions draw down, we must ensure that national and local authorities are equipped and committed to upholding those protections. Doing so requires continuous capacity-building, resource allocation and a zero-tolerance policy towards perpetrators of such violence.

Thirdly, we must sustain the momentum of gender-responsive reforms in the security sector. That includes ensuring that police and military forces are trained on gender sensitivity and are held accountable for their actions. We must also advocate increased recruitment and retention of women in those sectors, ensuring that they play a significant role in decision-making processes. We know that all contexts are different, but we also know this: with less of a United Nations presence in conflict settings, there is less security for women and girls, less attention to the violations of the rights of women and girls and a drastic drop in investment in programmes to advance gender equality.

While the Security Council has clearly called for gender-responsive United Nations transitions with plenty of gender expertise, gender analysis and well-thought-out planning, that is still not the case in practice. It is much less so when the United Nations may have to leave in haste without accomplishing its mandate or an orderly and responsible transition plan. That state of affairs is worrisome, and that is one of the reasons why we convened this meeting — to serve as a reminder to the international community of the power of international cooperation, on the women and peace and security agenda in particular.

The women and peace and security agenda remains a viable global agenda. We recognize the significant progress that has been made through the concerted efforts of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and regional organizations, as well as national Governments and civil society organizations. But despite that, women and girls are still encountering a myriad of targeted violations in conflict situations. Considering the accelerated drawdowns of United Nations peace operations, we believe that sustaining the implementation of the four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda will be challenging. We hope that briefings such as those we have heard today will help the Council in doing more gender-sensitive conflict analysis so that we can better understand not only the progress that has been made but also the challenges that remain in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the face of those accelerated drawdowns. The global community should adopt a robust set of toolkits for solutions that address those issues in order for us to attain our shared goal of maintaining international peace and security.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I welcome you, Madam President, to the Security Council, and I thank you for convening today's debate and for Sierra Leone's consistent leadership in promoting the women and peace and security agenda. I thank Executive Director Bahous, Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and Ms. Khair for their briefings. And while I will not specifically address the situation in the Sudan today, as we had a full meeting on it yesterday (see S/PV.9698), I think that Ms. Khair's comments really do highlight the challenges facing civilian populations, in particular women and children, during rapid transitions and drawdowns, so I am grateful to her for that. As our briefers today made clear, the women and peace and security agenda recognizes the critical role that women play in building sustainable peace. Women's contributions are integral to all stages of peacekeeping missions, including drawdowns, transitions and withdrawals. I will set out three priorities today — perspective, participation and prevention.

First, we must integrate a gender perspective into all components of peacekeeping missions, including preventing and responding to conflict-

related sexual violence. Gender-responsive conflict analysis and technical gender expertise are critical to missions' effectiveness, including in transition planning. I am pleased that we have secured strong gender commitments in recent mandate renewals, including on gender-based violence in Haiti and women's participation in Colombia. We call on Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations to prioritize women and peace and security considerations in all disengagement planning, including the planned withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, regarding participation, women peacekeepers engage with populations and in places less accessible to men, bringing unique insights. That improves awareness of security risks, including conflict-related sexual violence, and builds trust with local communities. The United Kingdom is creating an enabling environment for women peacekeepers. We contributed £1 million to the Elsie Initiative Fund last year, and the British Peace Support Team is training women in driving and weapons-handling, improving their pass rates in assessments. The participation of women's rights organizations is also key, and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali was a strong example of that. Its engagement with civil society enabled it to change attitudes to conflict-related sexual violence and better advocate for survivors.

Lastly, where prevention is concerned, transitions and drawdowns expose local communities to heightened risks of conflict-related sexual violence owing to security gaps, weakened institutions and increased political tensions. It is therefore vital to ensure that prevention remains an ongoing priority through the development of mission-wide coordinated and survivor-centred approaches for addressing conflict-related sexual violence. That is particularly important in times of transition and withdrawal. Prevention also includes tackling sexual exploitation and abuse, and that is why, through the British Peace Support Team, the United Kingdom trained 2,208 troops and police on sexual exploitation and abuse last year.

To be truly effective, peace and security mechanisms must understand and address the security needs of all people, including women and girls. Let us commit to ensuring that the women and peace and security agenda

plays a central role in all peacekeeping plans, including drawdowns, transitions and withdrawals.

**Mr. Hwang** (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this important and timely meeting. I would also like to express my appreciation to Executive Director Bahous, Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and Ms. Khair.

This briefing is particularly timely, as we have recently been witnessing abrupt terminations or ongoing drawdowns of United Nations peace operations in Mali, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The resulting security vacuums have disproportionately affected women and girls. While most United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions have integrated women and peace and security language into their mandates, it is far more important to ensure that such commitments are sustained throughout the start-up, drawdown and transition phases. In that regard, I would like to make three points.

First, the mandates of United Nations missions, especially those undergoing transitions, should more appropriately integrate gender perspectives into all aspects of their operations. The mandates can include protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, promoting women's participation in all peace and political processes and supporting the implementation of gender-responsive security-sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Those benchmarks can serve as a guiding framework to ensure that vital elements of the women and peace and security agenda are consistently implemented throughout and beyond the transition. When determining the transition timeline, it is also preferable to consider the progress made in achieving those benchmarks rather than just fixing dates.

Secondly, empowering local women at a grass-roots level is crucial to creating a resilient foundation that will endure beyond the presence of United Nations missions. Missions, country teams and Member States should not only support the host Governments but also work more closely with those local women and women's organizations to ensure that their voices are heard and their human rights protected. For its part, Korea has been working with the United Nations Population Fund since 2019 to support women and girls in preventing and responding to gender-based violence, as well as cooperating closely with UN-Women to advance the women and peace and security agenda

around the world, including through the partnership with the UN-Women Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality in Seoul. In addition, Korea will contribute to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund this year to actively support Sudanese women's participation in political and peace processes.

Lastly, the Security Council should make greater use of the Peacebuilding Commission throughout all stages of mission transitions. The Commission can support smooth transitions by engaging all relevant actors, including Member States, host countries, civil society and international and regional organizations. The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is also a crucial tool for mainstreaming the women and peace and security agenda into all transition processes. As a major donor to the PBF, the Republic of Korea appreciates that it continues to strive to meet its target of 30 per cent investment in initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Today's agenda aligns nicely with the sixth annual international conference on action with women and peace, which Korea will be hosting this December in Seoul. We look forward to building on the momentum created by today's constructive discussions.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana): I welcome you, Madam President, to the Security Council, and I thank Sierra Leone for convening this timely briefing on how we can sustain women and peace and security commitments in the context of accelerated drawdowns of peace operations. I would also like to thank UN-Women Executive Director Ms. Sima Bahous, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Ms. Martha Pobee, and Ms. Kholood Khair for sharing their perspectives.

Since the Security Council established the women and peace and security agenda almost 25 years ago, continued action has been taken to mainstream gender perspectives into peace support operations. Successive Council resolutions have sought to strengthen the participation and leadership of women in peace processes and to improve their protection, emphasizing that their perspectives and needs must be considered at all stages.

United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, guided by Security Council mandates, have become central in those efforts, making critical contributions in several areas. That includes increasing support for women's participation in political and peace processes, engaging women in

conflict prevention, promoting their human rights, addressing sexual and gender-based violence and supporting women's civil society organizations. Progress has been measured through monitoring and reporting mechanisms. More recently, gender advisers and focal points and women protection advisers have been providing targeted support to missions.

While it is understood that peacekeeping and special missions are temporary in nature and, ultimately, it would be for national authorities to own and sustain women and peace and security efforts, it is also recognized that systems need to be established and local capacity built to ensure continuity and sustainability. The Council has emphasized that transitions should be planned from the earliest stages of missions through partnership with host country authorities, United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

In the ideal situation, transitions would be gradual and structured, occurring when the peace operation has achieved its objectives and there is real progress, including on the women and peace and security front. However, in recent times we have seen several missions in accelerated drawdown and transition modes, with more on the horizon. It is therefore necessary to consider what action the Council could take so that the gains, including on the women and peace and security agenda, are not reversed and the risk of relapse into conflict or escalation is minimized.

Guyana considers that the following actions can aid in that regard.

First, it is essential that the Security Council continue to monitor country situations through the women and peace and security lens after mission drawdowns. The Council should request that the Secretary-General provide periodic reports with the support of relevant United Nations bodies, such as UN-Women.

Secondly, women and peace and security-related functions should be transferred from missions to United Nations country teams, with an emphasis on supporting women's political and economic empowerment and participation; addressing education and health needs; promoting strong protection and justice systems, including in relation to sexual and gender-based violence; and providing support to local women's civil society organizations. It is also very important for national authorities to be engaged on the value of honouring women and peace and security commitments

and strengthening their capacities to deliver on them. Given the increasing role of regional organizations, they too must be engaged to safeguard the gains made. The views of women must be taken into account in all of those engagements. Ms. Kholood Khair's briefing demonstrated the importance of such engagement.

Thirdly and critically, the question of funding must be addressed, as highlighted by Executive Director Bahous. The General Assembly, through its Fifth Committee, must consider resource gaps created by the departure of peace operations when allocating funding to United Nations agencies that would now have increased responsibilities. That should be complemented by international donor funding.

Finally, I highlight the potential roles of the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Support Office in supporting efforts and mobilizing resources for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment as an integral part of post-conflict peacebuilding.

While accelerated drawdowns are not ideal, Guyana believes that with political will, adequate resources, international support, strategic monitoring and effective mechanisms for accountability, women and peace and security commitments can be realized. It must be underscored, as was recognized in resolution 1889 (2009), that to achieve durable peace, security and reconciliation, women's empowerment and inclusion in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction are crucial.

**Ms. Samai (Algeria):** I wish to thank Sierra Leone for convening this important briefing. I also would like to thank the briefers for their remarks. I listened carefully to the remarks of the civil society representative.

Women play a vital and crucial role in managing and resolving conflict eruption. However, they face significant challenges and existential threats caused by armed conflicts, terrorism, violent extremism and sexual violence. Those challenges generate immense obstacles to the effective inclusion of women and obstruct the realization of peace, security and development. Unfortunately, despite overwhelming evidence showing that women's involvement in peacebuilding and mediation leads to lasting and positive peace, they remain largely excluded from participating in peace processes.

The drawdown of peace operations and the closure of special political missions in some conflict zones



could severely impact the process of peacekeeping and peacebuilding in those countries and would have direct effects on sustaining the commitments made on women and peace and security. That situation should not deter leaders and decision makers from including meaningful and effective women's participation in peacebuilding processes. In that regard, we stress the following points.

First, partnership and cooperation between Member States, civil society and international institutions must be empowered and encouraged and good practices shared.

Secondly, gender equality policies and the development of effective and comprehensive national programmes must be promoted to empower and protect women, particularly during conflicts. National ownership is key.

Thirdly, robust measures must be adopted to combat violence against women and girls in national development policies.

Fourthly, all parties concerned, including government bodies, national women's bodies, the private sector, civil society and the media must be involved in raising awareness about the importance of women's inclusion.

Fifthly, all obstacles must be removed to ensure that women peacebuilders and civil society leaders in conflict zones perform their roles in the most effective way possible.

Sixthly, there must be an unwavering commitment to ensuring the best implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) to enhance the involvement of women in security sectors and ensure their involvement in maintaining peace and security.

In that regard, Algeria has diligently worked to support the role of women as key architects of peace at the national and regional levels, as part of its vision for implementing resolution 1325 (2000) through a national action plan in 2023. That plan aims to contribute to the objectives of the United Nations and serves as a road map to affirm the country's priorities in strengthening women's full, effective and meaningful participation in peace and security.

Discrimination and violations against women must be condemned wherever they are and whoever commits them. In that regard, I take this opportunity

to remind members that we cannot discuss the role of women in peace and security without highlighting the dire situation of women in the occupied territories of Palestine, especially in Gaza. Women are facing continuing and systematic extermination and the most abhorrent forms of murder and abuse. They are being deprived of their most fundamental rights, the right to live and just be human.

In conclusion, Algeria reaffirms its commitment to promoting women's active participation in peace and security efforts and the paramount importance of their inclusion in every area of life. We will continue to advocate passionately for their empowerment in their role as builders of peace and security.

**Mr. Hauri** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We welcome the focus on the subject of today's meeting and thank all of the speakers.

"Peace begins with me, you and all of us" is the powerful message of 75 years of United Nations peacekeeping. That message must resonate with the entire population, including women and girls. Experience, and the examples set out by the speakers this morning, show us that if women's participation in peace processes is neglected when we tackle conflicts, those conflicts become protracted and women and girls pay a heavy price. Gender considerations are therefore paramount in ensuring that withdrawals of peacekeeping operations do not roll back women's rights and gender equality. A peacekeeping mission's withdrawal should not entail the loss of hard-won progress in terms of women and peace and security. That is not a new concept. In resolution 2594 (2021), the Council underscored the importance of gender analysis, expertise in gender issues, the mainstreaming of that dimension and women's full participation throughout transition processes. However, some of the tools developed in that context are not being used. How, then, do we ensure that withdrawals do not derail gender equality and women's rights?

First, gender benchmarks must form an integral part of all components of a United Nations mission from the moment it is deployed, as the Secretary-General underscored in his 2022 report on transitions (S/2022/522). The benchmarks must be based on an inclusive process and applied consistently. The capacity of national security institutions to protect the population, preserve civic space and ensure respect for human rights is a key ingredient, as is the ongoing

participation of women in decision-making processes, including those relating to the withdrawal of missions and the future of their countries. A dedicated gender policy, for example in the form of a national action plan, can incorporate all the measures necessary for maintaining and promoting gender equality.

Secondly, it is important to keep in mind that States have the primary responsibility to protect their populations, with due regard for gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities — a responsibility that must be informed by the international human rights framework, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). As we discussed in our Arria Formula meeting in March, CEDAW is a crucial instrument for holding States accountable for protecting women's rights before, during and after conflict. The Security Council and the United Nations must work closely with national and local authorities as soon as a United Nations mission is deployed in order to prepare withdrawal plans, facilitate the building and transfer of capacity, and adopt a gender-sensitive budgeting approach that is informed by established benchmarks.

Lastly, it is essential to document the experiences of past withdrawals and share them so that lessons can be learned about their implications for women's rights, participation and security. In Mali and the Sudan, for example, United Nations troop drawdowns disrupted the monitoring, reporting and analysis of the situation with regard to women's rights, including conflict-related sexual violence. The Peacebuilding Commission provides a platform for such collective learning that can also contribute to the work of the Council. The Peacebuilding Fund plays an important role in helping bridge the most urgent funding shortfalls in transitions. But while we should allocate additional resources to the Fund, that is not enough. Transitions must be planned in a sustainable way, including with resources from the regular budget.

As peacekeeping evolves, we cannot afford to leave women behind. Their rights and security are vital to achieving lasting peace. The decisions we take now lay the foundations for future peacekeeping efforts. The Council must live up to the concept that women and girls are not just beneficiaries but essential architects of peace. A successful transition is a transition with women and for them.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France)** (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Sierra Leone for holding this informative meeting on a crucial subject. I would also like to thank Ms. Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Pobee, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, and Ms. Khair for their very comprehensive briefings. I would like to make three points.

First, it is the responsibility of States to protect their populations throughout their territory in accordance with their international obligations. Given the increase in conflict-related sexual violence, women and girls must be protected in every situation. Women and girls bear the brunt of outbreaks of violence and sexual and gender-based violence. It is especially important to be vigilant during withdrawals of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. The Secretary-General's report on the topic (S/2022/522) underlines the impact of such withdrawals on the protection of civilians, in particular women and girls, as was seen when United Nations peacekeeping operations withdrew from the Sudan and Mali, leaving civilians even more vulnerable. Countries from which United Nations operations and missions are being withdrawn must strive for a smooth and responsible transition, in close cooperation with United Nations resident coordinators, country teams and civil society. According to the Charter of the United Nations, it is the duty of States to fully implement the Security Council's resolutions, including every aspect of the 10 resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda. They must ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law in all circumstances and the smooth running of all United Nations operations, especially the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Secondly, peacekeeping operations, special political missions and United Nations country teams must be adequately equipped to implement the women and peace and security agenda, including during periods of transition. That is why military gender advisers, for example, are an important and indispensable resource for the implementation of the agenda by peacekeepers on the ground. Since 2021, France has invested more than €650,000 in training such advisers so as to bolster their expertise on gender issues.

When they are taking over from peace missions, it is also essential that United Nations country teams, in coordination with national authorities, ensure that human rights violations and all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, continue to

be monitored. That requires not only sufficient funding but also a realistic timetable for transferring tasks from operations to country teams. France supports the efforts made in that regard by Ms. Pramila Patten, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and her team of experts. We also support the invaluable efforts of the Sanctions Committees' Panels of Experts to combat impunity. The Council must be more consistent in imposing sanctions on those who perpetrate or are responsible for sexual violence in times of conflict.

Thirdly, the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes before, during and after conflict is pivotal to achieving lasting peace. There are numerous examples of that, but I am thinking particularly of Colombia, where women negotiators from civil society are playing an instrumental role in the peace process. France is funding feminist organizations in the field to the tune of €250 million over the current period through a dedicated national fund. We are also supporting transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth, reconciliation and reparation commissions, aimed at strengthening the rule of law. Our national action plan on women, peace and security also aims to ensure that institutions established after a conflict or during the transition period take full account of the specific needs of women and girls. We also support draft general recommendation No. 40 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which, as Council members are aware, addresses the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. The recommendation is slated to be adopted in October.

We call for the women and peace and security agenda to be mainstreamed throughout the United Nations system. In that respect, we welcome the leading role played by UN-Women, the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs, the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security and civil society.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes Ms. Alghali, Deputy Foreign Minister for Sierra Leone, in presiding over today's meeting and thanks Executive Director Bahous and Assistant Secretary-General Pobee for their briefings. I have also listened carefully to the statement made by the representative of civil society.

Peace operations represent an important means for the Security Council to discharge its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In recent years, with changes in factors that include the situation on the ground and the will of the countries concerned, some United Nations missions have had to withdraw, downsize or make adjustments. How to make smooth transitions while maintaining peace and stability in the countries and regions concerned is an important topic for Council members to constantly reflect on, take stock of and improve upon.

In that regard, respect for the sovereignty and leadership of the countries concerned is a fundamental prerequisite. Consent of the countries concerned is a basic principle that has been developed over the years and should be effectively upheld at all stages. We support the United Nations and the Security Council in formulating clear and feasible transition plans and exit strategies for peace operations based on fully heeding and respecting the will of the countries concerned and aligning with their national development strategies and priorities, so as to ensure a smooth transition.

Women are important stakeholders in peace operations. Resolution 1325 (2000) explicitly supports women's equal and full participation in peace processes and calls for enhanced protection of women and girls in conflict areas. That is also one of the responsibilities of many missions. We support the Council in exchanging best practices and taking stock of lessons learned on how to better advance the women and peace and security agenda in the light of the situation, needs and challenges of peace operations in transition.

Development is the foundation of peace, and enhancing the development capabilities of the countries concerned should be the core objective of peace operations in transition. Therefore, we should focus on promoting women's empowerment based on development and supporting women, who account for half of the population, in leveraging their wisdom and potential, thereby enabling them to truly take their future and destiny into their own hands. We support United Nations missions' fulfilment of their mandates and design of projects with a focus on long-term and transitional needs by actively helping conflict areas develop infrastructure and education and eradicate poverty, so as to consolidate the structural foundation for gender equality. We support the countries concerned in elevating the protection of women's rights and interests to the level of the national will on

the subject and, along with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making sustained investments in women's empowerment and development, so as to continuously enhance women's representation and voice in political, economic, cultural and social affairs.

The transition of peace operations does not spell the end of international support. We support the international community, on the basis of respecting the sovereignty and leadership of the countries concerned, in continuing to support countries in conflict and their goal of women's development. We support UN-Women, the United Nations Development Programme and others in continuing to play their role to help the countries concerned effectively tackle the challenges faced by women, such as poverty, discrimination and the digital divide. Developed countries should effectively fulfil their official development assistance commitments and provide financial, technical and capacity-building support to developing countries, in particular African countries. We strongly call for accelerating the reform of the international financial architecture and enhancing the decision-making power of developing countries in global economic governance, so as to create favourable conditions for post-conflict countries to achieve development and prosperity.

It must be noted that all efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and to create a peaceful environment for civilians, including women, are key prerequisites for advancing the women and peace and security agenda. No matter what transitions or adjustments peace operations go through, promoting the political settlement of hotspot issues should always be the most fundamental mandate. United Nations missions should step up good offices and mediation, form synergies with regional organizations, support the countries concerned in promoting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and advance inclusion and reconciliation. Capacity-building support should be provided to the law enforcement agencies of the countries concerned in order to enhance their ability to protect civilians and maintain social order.

The Gaza conflict has now gone on for upwards of 300 days, with more than 10,000 women killed and more than 1 million Palestinian women and girls facing famine. We reiterate our call on all parties to respond to the international community's overwhelming consensus and to jointly promote the full and effective implementation of the relevant Council resolutions

to achieve an immediate ceasefire, put an end to the humanitarian catastrophe and contain the spillover of the conflict.

Over the years, China has always actively assisted with the reconstruction and development of post-conflict regions in such areas as economic development, education, health and infrastructure. Through the China-United Nations Peace and Development Fund, China has supported the countries concerned in carrying out projects and cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism, peacekeeping and good offices.

As the host country of the Fourth World Conference on Women, China has always taken concrete actions to contribute to the development of women in developing countries, in particular in conflict areas. We have dispatched more than 1,000 female officers and soldiers to United Nations peacekeeping operations, provided emergency food aid to women and children facing starvation in the Horn of Africa, helped more than 10,000 villagers in the Central African Republic to set up mushroom sheds and chicken farms, and assisted Afghan women in generating income through the China-Afghan pine nuts corridor. China is ready to continue working with the international community to make positive contributions to the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda.

**Ms. Gatt** (Malta): I thank Executive Director Bahous, Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and Ms. Khair for their comprehensive recommendations.

The rapid pace of these transitions presents unique challenges that require our immediate attention and action. Gender equality must remain at the core of the Organization's strategy, footprint and capacity to support sustainable peacebuilding. Regrettably, we are witnessing the withdrawal of United Nations peace operations and special political missions without the minimum conditions for ensuring women's security, humanitarian access and the rule of law having been met.

The precipitous exit of police and human rights operations severely constrains the capacity of the United Nations to protect civilians, including through early warning, mobile monitoring teams, and local mediation. Since 2019, all remaining multidimensional peace operations have embarked on or intensified transition planning. Consistent with United Nations policy, those processes must ensure meaningful consultations with women's groups and integrate



gender-responsive analysis to gauge the impacts of transitions on women, men, girls and boys.

Resolution 2594 (2021) underscores the necessity of embedding robust gender analysis and technical gender expertise through all the stages of mission planning, mandate implementation and review. We emphasize the critical need for including gender expertise among transition specialists. It is essential in defining gender-responsive benchmarks ensuring that missions are not forced to exit without fulfilling the minimum conditions for civilian safety and security. That is especially important in contexts such as the withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the deployment of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We support the Secretary-General's call for a clearer and more consistent use of gender-responsive benchmarks and stand-alone gender-equality indicators. They should assess progress and establish the minimum conditions for ensuring the sustainability of women and peace and security commitments. However, those commitments must be implemented. Women in the Sudan face widespread sexual and gender-based violence and continue to be excluded from peace talks and negotiations. As Ms. Khair urged today, we must safeguard and amplify women's participation in peace and political processes. The hard-won progress in supporting women's leadership in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding must not be lost during transitions.

We must also advocate for women's increased representation and gender expertise at all levels in peacekeeping, even as overall force numbers decrease. That is vital for continued political engagement on women and peace and security issues post-drawdown and for gender expertise within the remaining United Nations presence and among the communities affected, the host countries and the regional actors assuming civilian protection mandates. It is essential to maintaining progress following the departure of missions, consistent with United Nations transition policy in the context of mission drawdowns or withdrawals. Transition planning must allocate adequate resources for addressing conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. Despite agreement on the need for women's protection advisers, such specialists are deployed in only eight of the more than

20 countries covered in the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's annual report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2024/292).

The Peacebuilding Fund can be leveraged to address emergency gaps and catalyse gender-transformative reform in the security and justice sectors as well as arms control and disarmament. We recognize the important advisory role of the Peacebuilding Commission in advocating for sustained international attention and support for peacebuilding priorities throughout and beyond United Nations transition processes.

In conclusion, we call on all Member States to ensure that mission drawdowns do not heighten risks to women's security or erode gender-equality gains. The failure to prioritize gender equality in those transitions undermines women's security and jeopardizes sustainable peace. Immediate and decisive action is needed to integrate gender perspectives into all aspects of peace operations and transitions. Increased funding, enhanced political engagement and sustained support for women's leadership and protection are critical priorities.

**Ms. Carty** (United States of America): I thank Sierra Leone for its leadership on this issue. I thank Executive Director Bahous, Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and especially Ms. Khair for bringing her valuable insights on the situation in the Sudan to the Chamber today.

With the increasing numbers of mission transitions, the international community must deliberately plan for and support communities during these volatile moments. Part of the deliberate planning for mission transitions must be centring gender-responsive approaches across policies and programmes and putting the needs of women and girls at the top of the priority list. It also means ensuring that the resources match our priorities and that women and peace and security responsibilities are adequately funded. Today I will focus on three interrelated issues essential to preserving women and girls' rights during and after transition processes.

First, we must prioritize civil society engagement. Local women- and survivor-led groups must be regularly consulted and their views meaningfully incorporated into transition planning by the United Nations and host Governments. Civil society actors should be our first partners when we seek to carry out essential activities related to women and peace and security as missions draw down. For example, in the eastern Democratic

Republic of the Congo, one of the most dangerous places in the world for women and girls, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese authorities must better integrate the recommendations of civil society into transition planning for the subsequent phases of the drawdown in North Kivu and Ituri.

Secondly, during transitions, we encourage mission leaders to assess the impacts of climate change on the security situation using a gender lens, and to transfer that knowledge to the host Government, the United Nations country team and other entities tasked with addressing the drivers of conflict once the mission departs. The United States advocates for the inclusion of climate advisers in missions to identify priority mitigation efforts and engage community members, particularly women and girls, on adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. Thoughtful planning and partnership with climate advisers and local organizations can support local ownership and peacebuilding efforts during pivotal moments such as mission drawdowns.

Thirdly, missions, host Governments and the international community must work to prevent gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, as missions depart, and to support victims and survivors. Conflict-related sexual violence must be actively prevented, which is why the United States is a top donor to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and why we regularly coordinate with bilateral and multilateral partners on efforts to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. The continuation and support of monitoring mechanisms is essential to preventing conflict-related sexual violence. Monitoring mechanisms can help hold local authorities and international actors accountable for women and girls' safety and rights. Furthermore, effective monitoring provides valuable data for informing and galvanizing international action. At the same time, monitoring mechanisms must be specifically designed to address the needs of women and must actively consider scenarios created by the drawdown. The design process must include the voices of women and girls.

In conclusion, there is more we can do to support women and girls in transition settings. We must actively engage and elevate civil society organizations, especially those led by women and girls. We must understand and plan for the impacts of climate change

on peace and security. And we must maintain a focus on ending conflict-related sexual violence. No level of violence is acceptable. Those are moral obligations that we must realize together in critical transition settings.

**Mr. De La Gasca** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to thank Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Martha Pobee, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, and Ms. Kholood Khair, the civil society representative, for the information they provided, and to tell them that the topic of gender is a priority for Ecuador, particularly in conflicts and the effects and consequences that they have for women and children.

The exit and reconfiguration processes of peacekeeping operations and political missions are complex challenges for the international community, and even more so when they are poorly timed and planned. As resolution 2594 (2021) recognizes, experience shows that when transitions in peace operations are not carried out within a framework of opportunity and order that supports and reinforces the involvement of national institutions, the risks increase for civilians, especially women, children, young people and individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, it is undeniable that when the full, meaningful, equal and safe involvement of women in all stages of peace negotiations, electoral processes and political participation, as required by resolution 1325 (2000), is marginalized, it undermines peacebuilding efforts.

We must therefore motivate States' commitment and political will to provide deadlines that allow field teams to coordinate appropriate transition schedules, implement effective protocols for the transfer of capacities to national institutions, ensure the preservation of conflict-related statistical information and give continuity to the processes of inclusive dialogue and follow-up on outstanding issues.

The case of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq can serve as an example of how mission mandates can provide for the promotion, support and facilitation of exit and transition processes, based on timely coordination with national institutions on ongoing projects and programmes and follow-up on pending issues.

Guaranteeing the financing of peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations during transition processes is key to ensuring the timely mobilization of resources, based on the inclusion and participation of women, youth

and ethnic minorities, and with the goal of promoting leadership and empowerment with a gender focus.

We encourage the international community to monitor and support the coordinated efforts of States and peace operations in drawdown and reconfiguration situations, in particular efforts to re-establish civic space, establish transparent accountability mechanisms and support the implementation of national action plans on women and peace and security. Doing so will promote assertive interaction between all social and political actors, with the ultimate aim of advancing the construction of just, inclusive and peaceful societies in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Sima Bahous, the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Martha Pobe, and Ms. Kholood Khair for providing information on and their assessments of the current situation with regard to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

We have continuously paid close attention to the problems addressed by resolution 1325 (2000). Russia recognizes the importance of women's participation in peacekeeping processes and welcomes their increasing role when it comes to negotiations and peacekeeping. Women's contribution to addressing security issues, armed conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery cannot be overstated. Armed clashes have tragic impacts on women and children. Their interests must therefore be fully taken into account in the negotiation of truces and peace deals.

Obviously, women should be able, at the very least, to voice their concerns to the parties involved in peace processes. We also see many bright and talented women among politicians and diplomats. However, we believe that women's empowerment has nothing to do with imposing artificial quantitative parameters on women's involvement — simply having quotas in place will not solve the problem. First and foremost, efforts should be geared towards creating the conditions for women's meaningful participation in political and peacebuilding processes. In that regard, we should take into consideration the peculiarities of each specific situation and prioritize women's professional qualities while taking into account their personal interests.

Greater attention should be paid to addressing the problems of economic development and eradicating

poverty. In that regard, it is vitally important to strengthen cooperation between States and international organizations with a view to implementing programmes on economic empowerment for women. That includes facilitating access to education, job training and the resources and technologies needed to start and develop a business. Women's economic independence facilitates their social protection and integration into peacebuilding processes.

However, unilateral coercive measures imposed by Western countries that circumvent the Council remain a serious obstacle. Such measures have a highly detrimental impact on the status and well-being of women and their families, undermining their prospects and depriving them of opportunities in employment, education, social protection and other areas. We call on the United Nations Secretariat to actively monitor the adverse impact of such measures and make proposals to overcome their negative consequences, including for women.

It is also essentially important to make efforts to protect the family and traditional family values, which serve as the moral foundation of any society and are a necessary precondition for successful development now and in the future. Those efforts should be consistent and not allow for double standards when it comes to ensuring women's rights, dignity and security.

In that light it is painful to listen to all the beautiful words and generally acceptable statements uttered by our Western colleagues, because at this very moment, at the Olympic Games in Paris — which are essentially monopolized by them to the detriment of the international Olympic movement — we see female boxers being publicly subjected to violence by athletes who previously failed hormone testing by the International Boxing Federation. According to the Federation they are men, and common sense dictates that they are, in fact, men. That absolutely disgusting performance shows how much harm to women's rights and dignity has been caused by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender agenda that is being aggressively imposed on the world by the West. We believe that in many traditional societies, the influence of women, wives and mothers on political and social processes, brought to bear in ways that had been established over many centuries, and their influence in such places may be in fact even more effective than in societies that advocate liberal ideas.

With regard to United Nations peacekeeping operations, we essentially support the Secretary-General's initiatives to increase the representation of women in peacekeeping. As of July 2024, 19 female police and military personnel from Russia are serving in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We are actively training female peacekeepers from third countries in our specialized centres under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. We do so because we know that women's involvement allows us to establish more sustained and trusting relationships with the local population. It will also enable us to prevent — and investigate existing cases of — violations against women and children and take measures to facilitate the subsequent rehabilitation and reintegration of victims.

However, the situations in different conflict regions in which peacekeeping operations are deployed may vary significantly. The challenges they face are also diverse. Therefore, the importance of the gender factor in peacekeeping contingents should not be overemphasized when it comes to stabilizing the security situation, particularly in regions affected by armed and terrorist groups.

The priority of United Nations peacekeeping should be finding a peaceful solution as soon as possible. After all, the main responsibility for the security and protection of civilians, including women, and their well-being rests primarily with national Governments. We know examples of peacekeeping forces that remained in host countries for years but that were unable to significantly change the situation, and sometimes they even became part of the crisis themselves.

In an ideal world, the drawdown of United Nations peacekeeping missions should end with a complete handover of responsibility to the national Government on all matters. However, as we said earlier, that is not always possible. If that is the case, the necessary assistance can proceed through United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, including those focused on women's empowerment.

Regional organizations, such as the African Union, have also acquired significant experience in assisting the States of the continent in the areas we are discussing today. In our view, the international community should support those efforts by providing the necessary support.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the drawdown of United Nations peacekeeping missions should not lead to a decline in the protection of women and in their participation in peacekeeping. On the contrary, the process should boost traditional national and regional efforts with a view to ensuring security and achieving lasting and sustainable peace. Russia is willing to work constructively with all those who agree on the importance of that task.

**Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia):** I would like to thank Sierra Leone for organizing today's briefing. I also want to thank today's briefers — Ms. Bahous, Ms. Pobee and Ms. Khair — for their insights and for their recommendations to the Council.

In recent years, we have seen a drawdown of peacekeeping operations and special political missions in eight country settings. More than at any previous time, there is a need for the Council to focus on the post-mission phase to safeguard the gains achieved during the mission's presence on the ground. It goes without saying that all withdrawals must be accomplished in a safe, orderly, responsible, gradual and sustainable way. They must serve to uphold stability and security. On many occasions when United Nations missions had to withdraw abruptly, without a planned transition in place, we saw a return to many of the challenges of the pre-mission period. That has to be addressed. Seeing decades of international investment evaporate overnight should make us reflect. Successfully transitioning from conflict to peace-building and sustaining peace is complex and requires an inclusive approach. It cannot be achieved without a genuine and strong commitment to the women and peace and security agenda. To that end, we must guarantee the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women in peace negotiations, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes. Peace cannot be sustained if it is achieved by, and for, only half of the population. That participation is essential to preventing a recurrence of conflict, and for that we need the following components.

The first is a comprehensive gender-responsive analysis and expertise integrated into all phases of transition processes. Gender and women protection advisers should work closely with departing missions and United Nations country teams to ensure that gender dimensions are included throughout transition planning. Additionally, adequate resources have to be allocated to the United Nations country teams to sustain efforts and the gains achieved with regard to gender equality.



Secondly, local women-led organizations play a critical role in building community resilience and peacebuilding, and providing continued support for their work is therefore crucial, including through secure funding. Slovenia will maintain its support for the work of local women-led organizations as well as through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which enables women peacebuilders and human rights defenders to respond to crises and build peace in their communities.

Thirdly, we must invest more in women's participation and leadership. We should continue to encourage national political actors to include women in their delegations. They should also be encouraged to allocate resources to implementing the commitments in the women and peace and security agenda. If necessary, the United Nations and its Member States can offer training, capacity-building and any other kind of logistical support. We value the expertise of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in that respect.

Women and girls are often the first to suffer the devastating impacts of conflicts and the last to benefit from the peace that follows. If we are to contribute to lasting peace it is essential to ensure their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in peace and security processes. Their rights need to be protected and accountability for sexual and gender-based violence has to be guaranteed. Transitions are an opportunity for positive change. Jointly with United Nations country teams and in close cooperation with Governments, United Nations missions should prepare gender-responsive benchmarks before they withdraw. We can achieve an inclusive and equitable peace that benefits everyone only by upholding our commitments to the women and peace and security agenda.

**Mr. Yamazaki (Japan):** I welcome your presence in the Chamber, Madam President, and I thank Sierra Leone for convening today's important briefing, focusing on sustaining commitments to the women and peace and security agenda in the context of accelerated transitions of peace operations. I also thank Ms. Bahous, Ms. Pobee and Ms. Khair for their comprehensive briefings.

The Security Council has mandated United Nations field missions to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence and to establish monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements. When drawdowns and

withdrawals of peace operations are accelerated, it is important for the Council to develop more advanced and holistic transition planning for missions, enabling them to ensure that tasks related to sexual, gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence are properly transferred in order to prevent negative consequences for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. I would like to make three recommendations in that regard.

First, in order to best support sustainable United Nations mission transitions, sufficient time should be ensured to transfer tasks to host Governments, United Nations country teams and civil society organizations. Accordingly, peace operations should engage with non-mission stakeholders from the outset of normal United Nations peace operations. Furthermore, activities aimed at achieving a smooth transition should be guided by gender-responsive conflict analysis and take into account the needs of women and girls.

Secondly, the entire international community should work together with United Nations country teams and other stakeholders in order to secure women's leadership and agency. We should also prioritize ensuring civic space for advancing women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in politics, peacebuilding and other processes during and after the transition process. That includes building the capacity of women leaders and institutions.

As members will recall, during its March presidency of the Council, Japan held an open debate entitled "Promoting conflict prevention — empowering all actors, including women and youth" (see S/PV.9574), followed by a press stakeout attended by 67 countries, which committed jointly to conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding. That necessitates a comprehensive approach that engages all members of society, including women. In the debate, Japan reiterated that women should be included in all stages of peacekeeping operations, including transitions, and in all preventive activities at the national, regional, and international levels. In that vein, we would like to recall that resolution 2594 (2021) requests that the Secretary-General ensure that women's needs are fully integrated into all prioritized and sequenced stages of mission mandates and mission transitions.

Thirdly, to prevent sharp drops in funding and interventions on gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda after the departure of a

United Nations mission, a transition plan should be developed in advance. The plan should ensure women's participation, which will contribute to preventing a relapse into conflict after the mission's withdrawal. As we learned from that open debate, a women and peace and security perspective should be incorporated into missions' activities as soon as they are deployed. The Security Council should encourage missions to cooperate with all actors, including other United Nations agencies that will remain in the country after a mission withdraws, and to call on them to implement the women and peace and security agenda. I would also like to remind the Council that the Peacebuilding Commission has a good track record for holding meetings on countries dealing with mission transitions and women and peace and security, since it convenes all stakeholders to discuss how to further the support to those countries and submits useful advice to the Security Council.

In conclusion, Japan reaffirms its commitment to the women and peace and security agenda and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence throughout peace processes.

**Mr. Fernandes** (Mozambique): We commend the Sierra Leone presidency for convening this timely briefing on an important topic. We are also grateful to Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Martha Pobee, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, and civil society representative Ms. Kholood Khair for their comprehensive and insightful briefings.

We have been witnessing drawdowns, reconfigurations and accelerated closures of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions in various areas. Mozambique holds the view that such transitions, if mismanaged, could pose significant risks to the hard-won gains on the women and peace and security agenda across the areas of peacebuilding, security and development. It is imperative that careful consideration and meticulous planning guide those processes to mitigate the associated risks and ensure sustainable peace and stability. The protection and well-being of civilians, particularly women and girls, should be our top priority.

The women and peace and security agenda, as a critical component of United Nations peace operations, has the potential to catalyse sustainable peace and transform the lives of women and girls in conflict-

affected areas. That can be achieved by promoting gender equality, enhancing protection, supporting women's participation in decision-making and empowering women's leadership.

In that context, women and peace and security considerations are crucial in the drawdown of peace operations to, first, safeguard progress in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment; secondly, maintain women's engagement in decision-making and peacebuilding; thirdly, ensure continuity in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence; fourthly, equip national and local institutions to assume women and peace and security responsibilities; and lastly, allocate adequate resources, both financial and technical, to support women and peace and security initiatives beyond the mission mandates of peace operations. Mozambique is convinced that those goals can be achieved through the comprehensive integration of the women and peace and security agenda into transition planning, supporting national capacities and local ownership, fostering partnerships with women's organizations and monitoring progress and adapting strategies.

Drawing from our own experience as a former host to the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), we can attest that ONUMOZ marked a significant transition for Mozambique, with a focus on building national capacity, promoting women's meaningful participation and addressing ongoing challenges. The post-ONUMOZ period presented new opportunities for Mozambican women to engage in peacebuilding and development initiatives. Its legacy continues to shape the country's trajectory. That was possible owing to, among other things, the following: first, strong political will, reflected in Government initiatives to address gender-based violence and promote women's participation in decision-making; secondly, the continued crucial role of local women's organizations in promoting the women and peace and security agenda; and thirdly, sustained international support to women and peace and security initiatives in Mozambique.

Mozambique reiterates its unwavering support to women and peace and security considerations in United Nations peace operations. We are in favour of strong and actionable language in Security Council resolutions and decisions on mission drawdowns and withdrawals. We urge the international community to ensure that transitions are gender-inclusive to ensure meaningful

change and enduring success. That approach is essential for paving the way for a just and sustainable future for women and girls in post-conflict societies.

**The President:** The representative of Algeria has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Koudri** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor for a second time. However, my country's delegation was hoping not to mix between politics and sport, especially in the context of the current Olympic Games. We heard an implicit reference, but a very clear one, addressed to a female champion athlete from my country. In that context, I would like to stress the following.

The courageous boxer Ms. Imane Khelif was born female. She lived throughout her childhood as a lively girl. She has practised sports as a full-fledged woman. There is not a shred of doubt on that matter, except on the part of those with a political agenda whose objectives we do not know.

In conclusion, I would like to refer everyone in the Council to the international Olympic Committee itself, which has clearly and beyond any doubt recognized in a statement our courageous and proud female athlete champion and silenced all those who doubt her, as she is a genuine Algerian woman.

*The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.*