



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8508th meeting
Thursday, 11 April 2019, 10 a.m.
New York

Provisional

President: Ms. Von der Leyen/Mr. Heusgen (Germany)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Asumu Abeme
France	Mr. Delattre
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation	Mrs. Gilmutdinova
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

United Nations peacekeeping operations

Women in peacekeeping

Letter dated 27 March 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2019/275)

Letter dated 4 April 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2019/293)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

United Nations peacekeeping operations

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The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Estonia, Fiji, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Major General Kristin Lund, Head of Mission and Chief of Staff, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization; and Ms. Lorna Merekaje, Secretary General of South Sudan Democratic Engagement Monitoring and Observation Programme and Women's Representative to the National Constitution Amendment Committee.

Ms. Merekaje is joining today's meeting via video-conference from Juba.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Gerardus Van Den Akker, observer of the European Union to the United Nations; and Her Excellency Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to

the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/275, which contains the text of a letter dated 27 March 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, and document S/2019/293, which contains the text of a letter dated 4 April 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Germany addressed to the Secretary-General transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and now give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I welcome this debate on women in peacekeeping as we strive for progress on a key element in the maintenance of international peace and security.

With the launch of the system-wide strategy on gender parity, in 2017, the United Nations embarked upon an ambitious and essential system-wide effort to enhance women's representation at all levels and in all arenas. A key priority is to increase the number of women in peacekeeping — both civilian and uniformed — which is where we need the most improvement. This is not just a question of numbers, but also of our effectiveness in fulfilling our mandates.

Evidence shows that greater numbers of women peacekeepers lead to protection responses that are more credible and meet the needs of all members of local communities. Women in patrol units are better able to reach both men and women in areas of operation, accessing critical intelligence and providing a more holistic view of the security challenges. The presence of women at checkpoints has been credited with promoting a less confrontational atmosphere, and more women in troop contingents is credited with higher reporting of sexual and gender-based violence and lower incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Equally, access to women's networks can enable female peacekeepers to consult with a broader section of the population, who may have very different

requirements and perspectives on sustainable peace. This lays the ground for another shared goal: more representative and inclusive peace processes.

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, we need to do far more to ensure that women's rights, women's voices and women's participation are at the centre of peacekeeping decision-making. This is central to sustainable solutions in all the contexts in which we work.

Through resolution 2242 (2015), on women and peace and security, adopted in 2015, the Security Council called on us to double the numbers of women in military and police components of United Nations peacekeeping operations by 2020 and to review the barriers to their recruitment and advancement. We are pressing forward on those goals.

The Action for Peacekeeping initiative calls for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all stages of peace processes, as well as the integration of a gender perspective into all stages of analysis, planning, implementation and reporting. I thank the more than 150 Member States that have signed on to that commitment. I also thank those Member States that launched the Elsie Initiative on Women in Peace Operations at last week's Peacekeeping Ministerial on overcoming barriers to increasing women's meaningful participation in peace operations.

The Action for Peacekeeping Initiative builds on the numerous policies and strategies of the United Nations aimed at strengthening performance, accountability and the implementation of women and peace and security mandates. In support of our commitments in those areas, we have undertaken a range of actions to support and promote women's involvement in our operations.

Last year, we launched the gender-responsive peacekeeping operations policy, which commits us to promoting leadership and accountability both for gender equality and for the women and peace and security agenda. For civilian personnel, each field mission has developed its own gender-parity strategies, and our leadership in the field is more than 40 per cent female. I have also established a working group on emergency measures for gender parity in peace operations, to tackle some of the specific challenges we have identified in recruiting and retaining women in field environments, including in our rules and regulations. They include addressing conditions in

missions to provide more suitable accommodation, facilities, lighting and health facilities.

We must also strive to ensure that the rosters from which we recruit are gender-balanced and that the gains we have secured in recruitment in recent years are not eroded during the downsizing of missions. A set of proposals in that regard have already been presented to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

This year we rolled out the uniformed gender-parity strategy, which builds on the commitment established in resolution 2242 (2015) and goes further, calling for more than just a doubling of numbers. Targets for women's representation range from 15 per cent to 35 per cent by 2028, inclusive of military, police and justice and corrections personnel. The achievement of those targets will represent a significant step towards parity. Since December 2015, the number of women in uniform has increased by approximately 1 per cent. That is clearly not enough. But there are some notable gains on which we can build.

The number of women staff officers and military observers has almost doubled since the first Peacekeeping Ministerial in November 2017, with women now representing more than 13 per cent of deployed personnel. Also since that first meeting, 27 countries that had previously not deployed any women at all now do so. And 30 more countries have deployed more than 15 per cent women military observers and staff officers, bringing the total number of countries to 48.

Among police personnel, the representation of women has increased by 300 — more than 3 per cent — since the 2017 Peacekeeping Ministerial. Nine per cent of personnel in formed police units are now women. Furthermore, the number of female heads of United Nations police components in the field has increased, including in Abyei, Cyprus, Darfur and South Sudan.

Our uniformed gender-parity strategy also sets targets for uniformed corrections and justice officers in the field. However, that area has been more challenging

We in the Secretariat will continue to press ahead in all those areas. But to keep on track, we need assistance from Member States: first, through increased nominations of women officers and, secondly, a sharper focus on women in battalions and formed police units. I also appeal to Member States and their capitals to

do their utmost to meet the targets in the uniformed gender-parity strategy, not only through pledges but, more important, through the sustained recruitment and deployment of women within their national services.

I am pleased that we are very close to gender parity in the senior leadership of the United Nations for the first time in the history of the Organization, and well ahead of my 2021 commitment — but that is an area where I can decide alone. I am committed to sustaining that progress, which makes clear that what is needed ultimately is political will and persistence. We need to bring the same spirit to our peace operations. This is crucial for our effectiveness, credibility and reputation. We count on Member States' sustained support.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Major General Lund.

Major General Lund: I thank you, Madam President, for inviting me to speak here today. My special thanks go to Germany for initiating this meeting on women in peacekeeping.

The momentum on pushing for gender equality must be maintained. I am very impressed and happy that the Secretary-General has placed gender high up our agenda. He is a role model for us Heads of Mission and Force Commanders.

I will approach my five minutes from a practical angle, with examples on how I tried to increase the numbers, facilitate women in missions, promote mindfulness of gender issues and reach out to the local community.

When I was appointed Force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), in 2014, I was surprised to see how much power one had as a Force Commander. My first goal was to team up with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General at that time, Ms. Lisa Buttenheim. We matched, and for once I did not need to convince my boss that gender was important. Both of us had gender equality in our spine. She had full trust in me and empowered me. When I arrived, the percentage of military females stood at 4 per cent. Ms. Buttenheim brought me into all political and troop- and police-contributing country (TCC/PCC) visits, during which we put gender at the top of the agenda. Just that focus on gender resulted in increasing female participation to 8 per cent and 25 per cent for military

and police components, respectively. I can never forget that I wondered why other Force Commanders did not use their influence and power when it comes to gender equality within the mission and in the local society.

We had 26 positions in UNFICYP, operating 24/7/365. Many of them were not organized to support both genders. We established a project to change that, and, by the time I left, all 26 positions could accommodate both. Generally, armed forces have a hard time retaining women for a life-long commitment. There are many reasons that women do not stay, but one is the male culture within the military organization. To take just an example — the gym — all camps and positions have a gym, and in most of them there are posters showing half-naked women. How many women go to the gym in a bikini? Instead, the walls should have posters on how to do exercise, with normal outfits for gym. Posters demeaning to women vanished in UNFICYP.

I also noticed that our military skills competitions included only males on the teams. I changed that. All teams had to have females. Yes, it was a challenge for the countries that had sent infantry units. But very often the support component had females, and so they had to include them. All of our competitions and games had to have female representation. That led to a more inclusive environment in all units.

I held weekly sector commander meetings. When Headquarters sent directives to the mission on sexual exploitation and abuse and gender, I used them to underline my responsibilities as well as theirs. I also had to do research to find out in which countries among my TCCs and PCCs prostitution was legal, so that I could focus more on those commanders. When we had staff training on the code of conduct, HIV, gender and sexual exploitation and abuse, I was always present, both to underline the importance of those issues and to be a good role model for both women and men. I also initiated a female military network. Those types of networks can be useful to address different issues. We have had a female military network in place in Norway since 1989. That has been important to me.

As a female Force Commander and Head of Mission, I do everything that men do, but there are many other doors that open in society because you are a woman. I went in those doors. That resulted in public speaking nearly every week and the possibility to engage with all of society. Lisa Buttenheim and I engaged with the

first ladies to become more visible to the women on the island.

In my present capacity, I try to do a lot of the same. I am up to 12 per cent female observers and gender is at the top of my agenda.

My final message is that troop- and police-contributing countries must do more. The Secretary-General has given the Security Council a good example of how it is possible to change within a short time. Every chief of defence has the power to change. We out in the field need to be able to reach out to all of society. The Security Council can make that happen.

The President: I thank Major General Lund for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Merekaje.

Ms. Merekaje: My name is Lorna Merekaje. I address the Security Council today in my capacity as Secretary General of South Sudan Democratic Engagement Monitoring and Observation Program that is a national civil society organization in South Sudan focusing on good governance and democracy, conflict mitigation and gender mainstreaming in my beloved country. I also speak as one of two women representatives in the National Constitutional Amendment Committee out of 15 members of the Committee, which was established under the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

On behalf of my organization and the women of South Sudan and on my own behalf, please accept my humble gratitude, Madam, for inviting me to address the Council today. With your permission, allow me to add my voice in emphasizing the importance of this discussion on women in peacekeeping operations. As the world has come to realize the significance of the meaningful involvement of women in decision-making in all spheres of life, I would like to mention that my country is still grappling with that fact, and especially the fulfilment of the 25 per cent affirmative action target provided by the Constitution, which has now been increased to 35 per cent, in accordance with the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed in September 2018.

While we appreciate the efforts that have been made so far by the United Nations, I would like to argue that peacekeeping efforts could add more value to the lives

of ordinary citizens in host countries if the number of women in missions were increased and if they were engaged in undertaking roles and responsibilities at both the leadership and the supportive levels within peacekeeping operations in the host countries.

I would like to reiterate my genuine concerns regarding the operating environments and facilities for female peacekeeping personnel while on mission in host countries, as well as the challenges faced by troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs) in ensuring that female personnel meet the deployment criteria set out for participation in peacekeeping operations. However, in my view, these challenges can be addressed if there exists adequate will on the part of all actors to address them. I am referring to host countries, TCCs, PCCs and Council members.

We recognize the significance of ground-breaking decisions of the Council, such as resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions — specifically resolution 2242 (2015), which calls for doubling the number of women in peacekeeping operations, and especially in police contingents, by increasing their number through 2020 — the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the efforts made by different countries to develop national action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Experience has shown that increasing the number of women in peacekeeping operations is likely to encourage positive and friendly interaction between mission personnel and the host country and communities, as is the case with the all-female contingent of Bangladesh and female peacekeeping officers deployed in Haiti, as well as the kind of relationship that UN-Women, country offices and the Gender Section of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan continue to build with South Sudanese women.

My appeal to the Council today is that, first, it ensure that decisions made with respect to the deployment of peacekeeping operations reflect the commitments made to date and demand action from the stakeholders involved, such as the TCCs, PCCs and host countries.

Secondly, it should impose specific standards and requirements for missions and peacekeeping operations in upholding and instituting periodic review mechanisms in order to create and maintain positive relationships and the engagement of peacekeeping personnel with the host communities.

Thirdly, it should review and improve standards and working conditions for female personnel on mission so as to ensure the full integration of women and peace and security objectives, including mentorship programmes designed for retention and career development for female civilian and uniformed personnel.

Fourthly, it should enhance the mandate of United Nations country missions to include the meaningful engagement and participation of local civil society, women and youth organizations in the design and implementation of United Nations peace operations, United Nations-led peace processes, political dialogues and peacebuilding initiatives in the country. I believe that it is important to engage the organizations that exist in the country so that the community has confidence in any initiative that is implemented.

Finally, in order to sustain and build upon progress made to date in the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda, and while we talk about increasing numbers of women in peacekeeping operations, I also want to mention that it is important for us not to lose track of the need to seek justice and accountability for sexual and gender-based violence committed by peacekeeping personnel in different countries around the world.

The President: I thank Ms. Merekaje for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Federal Minister of Defence of Germany.

My thanks go once again to Secretary-General Guterres, Major General Kristin Lund and Ms. Merekaje for their briefings.

The women and peace and security agenda is one of Germany's priorities during its membership of the Security Council and during our presidency this month. In this open debate, I should like to focus on women serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

In my five years as Defence Minister, I have met many female peacekeepers, in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, for example, and many other missions. I have always been impressed with their dedication and diligence. More importantly, it has been obvious that they are always broadening their mission's skill set. Women are not better peacekeepers than men, but they are different. And this diversity is a strength. Yet, almost 20 years after the adoption of the landmark

resolution 1325 (2000), we are still far from the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in peace operations. I would like to present five ideas on how to change that.

First, in empowering women in all walks of life, visibility is key. We need role models to stir the imagination — successful female mentors who tell their stories to younger women and share their experience. Therefore, Germany will take the initiative to establish a global female peacekeepers network. We pledge substantial support to get it up and running and invite Member States to contribute ideas of their own.

Secondly, the network will support the Elsie initiative, which is central to increasing the percentage of women peacekeepers. We applaud Canada for this great initiative and intend to provide up to €2 million to the Elsie trust fund.

Thirdly, we must send more women into international peacekeeping missions. We need more women in our national forces. Germany is striving to increase the share of female soldiers in our armed forces more rapidly than before, but also, and that is crucial, the share of female soldiers in leading positions. As Minister, I understand that this effort requires a constant pull from the top, a fight against unconscious bias and real barriers, and constant evaluation. Transparency is key. That is why my Ministry created a staff element on equal opportunity, diversity management and inclusion. This has led, for example, to a benchmarking of the evaluation of male and female soldiers, to a mentoring programme for junior female officers and to a regular exchange on best practices. Once again, transparency is crucial.

Fourthly, Germany has already been looking at what keeps women from joining our forces and advancing in them to top positions. We are seeking to intensify our analysis by initiating a national barrier assessment. We will determine what keeps more women from joining peace operations. We invite the United Nations and interested Member States to share their experience with similar assessments.

Fifthly, and finally, Germany has enhanced its military observer training course to focus specifically on the role of women in peacekeeping. We have opened the course to international participants; 22 women from 20 countries were part of the pilot course last year. This success has encouraged us to offer this course again,

on a permanent basis. I invite all present to help us promote this opportunity.

Let me conclude by expressing my gratitude to all present for their contributions today. The peacekeepers' Blue Helmet symbolizes protection and security. Let us ensure that this helmet is worn by more women, for the sake of peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the African countries that are members of the Security Council, that is, Equatorial Guinea and South Africa, I should like to thank the German presidency and you yourself, Madam Minister, for having convened this open debate on the participation of women in peacekeeping operations. I would also like to commend and thank His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and the eminent briefers for their high-quality briefings.

Allow me to note here that the three African countries members of the Security Council align themselves with the statement to be delivered later by Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed on behalf of the African Union (AU).

For more than 70 years now, as United Nations peacekeeping operations have been serving the lofty cause of global peace and security around the world, their numbers have continued to increase. Estimated at more than 110,000 personnel, the staff of United Nations missions now reflects the new types of threats, asymmetric deployment environments and the multidimensional demands placed upon peacekeeping.

In contrast to these developments, the participation of women in peacekeeping operations has remained marginal and falls far below the parity goals set by the United Nations. For Africa, which hosts seven peacekeeping operations and has its own peace Mission, the African Union Mission in Somalia, women's participation remains a major challenge to be overcome despite the African Union's commitment to promoting the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Indeed, we are convinced that the deployment of women peacekeepers not only contributes to gender equality and the empowerment of women but is also vital to the transformation of United Nations missions as well as to security-sector reform.

(*spoke in English*)

In line with its commitments to the women and peace and security agenda, the African Union, through troop- and police-contributing countries, has made progress in institutionalizing women's participation and leadership in peacekeeping missions. The joint AU-United Nations fact-finding mission on women and peace and security, conducted in the field in 2017 and 2018 by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security; the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security; the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; and the Executive Director of UN-Women, has clearly established that women victims of war and conflict are more engaged with military women and police than men. Failure to take them into account could have an impact on reconciliation and peacebuilding processes.

(*spoke in French*)

Although women provide undeniable added value, many political and cultural factors continue to hold back their inclusion in peacekeeping operations. These include cultural obstacles and stereotypes, unsuitable training policies and recruitment mechanisms that put women at a disadvantage. We are therefore firmly convinced that additional efforts must be made to eliminate these obstacles, including all forms of violence and intimidation preventing the deployment of women in peacekeeping operations.

To that end, the African Union adopted a code of conduct and a zero-tolerance policy that define the African Union's position against sexual violence, abuse and exploitation committed by peacekeepers and military personnel. The code is shared with all troop-contributing countries and integrated into all related training programmes.

We must also further combat all the forms of discrimination that women peacekeepers face. Gender stereotypes must be combated in allocating strategic roles in missions, and the United Nations must continue to improve accommodation and sanitation infrastructure in order better to meet the specific needs of women.

The African Union has also established a network of women mediators, Fem-Wise Africa, so as to ensure women's leadership in peace and security, alongside the African Women Leaders Network. By endorsing resolution 2457 (2019), the two networks promote the

role of women in peacekeeping and call for a qualitative increase in the number of women in peace operations.

The African Union has also assigned gender officials to the various peacekeeping operations to ensure that women's voices are heard and amplified and that women can participate in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

In spite of the many challenges that remain, our continent has made notable progress, including in the integration of issues related to women, gender equality and peace and security into the African Peace and Security Architecture and general programmes for peace and security. Currently 25 African countries have national action plans on women and peace and security, that is, 31 per cent of the total number of countries around the world to have such plans.

(spoke in English)

It is undeniable that the inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions, whether under United Nations mandates or regional organizations, is a shared responsibility between troop-contributing countries and the United Nations. Troop- and police-contributing countries must therefore work to overcome cultural barriers and stereotypes and mainstream the gender dimension into the training and recruitment of the military and police personnel of their contingents.

With regard to the United Nations, it is important to continue communication and advocacy for women's participation in peacekeeping and to provide incentives for troop-contributing countries that are making an effort to increase the participation of women in peacekeeping missions. It is also necessary to provide peacekeeping personnel with all of the appropriate resources to carry out their mandate effectively. Targeted training, capacity development and appropriate predeployment training and equipment are essential to advancing the Secretary-General's vision for his Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

(spoke in French)

Africa's commitment to take ownership of its collective security through African peace operations remains firm, as does its commitment to increase women's participation pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000). Meeting that noble goal also requires resolving the issue of financing African peace support operations, the effectiveness of which depends upon predictable and sustainable funding.

The three African members of the Security Council appreciate the constructive cooperation that exists between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council in seeking solutions to the current challenges to peace and security in Africa. Our countries sincerely hope that their joint efforts will lead to a sustainable response to that major concern.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Allow me to warmly welcome you among us, Madame President. Your presence and participation in this open debate in the Security Council underline the importance of the subject that we are discussing. Let me also thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their very informative and valuable contributions.

In my intervention I would like to touch upon three main topics: first, the operational significance of women peacekeepers; secondly, the challenges and opportunities related to mandate implementation; and, thirdly, the Polish Government's implementation of the framework for the United Nations women and peace and security agenda in my country.

Today's debate is timely as it follows the United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial on uniformed capabilities, performance and protection held on 29 March. During that event, we heard many encouraging examples of how women's participation in peacekeeping operations can bring added value and increase missions' effectiveness. I would like to mention one particular female peacekeeper — Lieutenant Commander Marcia Andrade Braga — who was awarded the annual United Nations Military Gender Advocate Award, by the Secretary-General. Her outstanding performance demonstrates the significant role that the gender perspective plays in increasing operational performance and improving the protection of civilians.

In that context, we call for the increased participation of women peacekeepers, particularly in front-line roles engaging with the local population and setting an example for local women leaders, as they act as the key initiators of change, starting with the households, schools and institutions in which they work. In that vein, I would like to stress the need for the United Nations and its peacekeeping missions to appoint more women to leadership roles. We can follow the examples provided by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus with its female Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head, Force Commander and

Senior Police Adviser and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, which is represented here today by Major General Kristin Lund, Head of Mission and Chief of Staff. Increasing women's participation in missions still remains a challenge for all of us. That is why Member States should strive towards nominating more female candidates for leadership positions at every level of command, from the top of the mission to platoon leaders.

I would like to reiterate our strong support for the obligations set out in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, while underlining that the participation of women at all phases of the peace process should be full, equal and meaningful. That also refers to the challenges and opportunities facing mandate implementation. Poland believes that only by strengthening adherence to the women and peace and security principles can a long-lasting and sustainable solution to any given conflict be achieved. In that context, we must mention the significant role of women peacekeepers in addressing charges of sexual exploitation and abuse. We recognize their profound role in prevention and raising awareness during predeployment training, as well as in conducting proper investigations when allegations arise.

As we all know, words can make a difference only when they are translated into action. Therefore, we are glad that, in 2018, Poland introduced its first national action plan on women and peace and security for the period from 2018 to 2021. That strategic approach was jointly developed by different ministries with the special role of the Government advocating for equal treatment. It also widely consulted with non-governmental organizations promoting the role of women in the security sector. The action plan will allow for systematizing efforts and assessing progress made by Polish institutions to implement the women and peace and security agenda and to set further priorities in that area.

I would like to conclude by expressing our strong support for, and gratitude to, all women peacekeepers. Their sacrifice and dedication help bring hope to millions of people facing daily threats. It is crucial in that it sets an example for thousands of women in their households, local communities and Governments. The work that they carry out is unique, irreplaceable and invaluable. We all owe those brave women our greatest recognition, reassurance and appreciation.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Secretary-General, Major General Kristin Lund and Ms. Lorna Merekaje for their informative briefings.

The State of Kuwait aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

I should like to address three issues within the framework of our discussion today, namely, the protection of civilians, increasing the participation of women, and reforms.

First, with regard to the protection of civilians, most peacekeepers work within missions where the protection of civilians is at the core of their mandate. In many missions, including the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, women constitute a significant percentage of those civilians who seek the protection of peacekeepers, as Ms. Merekaje mentioned. Hence the active participation of women peacekeepers in all the components of any mission is a response to the actual requirements and is needed to engage and communicate with local communities while focusing first and foremost on the population as part of a people-centred approach, without interfering in the primary responsibility of countries to protect their citizens.

Secondly, with regard to increasing the participation of women, troop-contributing countries make tireless efforts to ensure the deployment of peacekeeping forces, including women, after adequate training so that we can guarantee their safety, as we have pledged to do in various United Nations forums. Improving performance therefore is an important factor in increasing the participation of women in peacekeeping at all levels, including leading positions such as Force Commanders and Police Commissioners. Our ambition of achieving 15 per cent women's participation might seem modest. However, the percentage of women participating in peacekeeping varies from one country to another, and we cannot apply one model on every individual country.

Thirdly, with regard to reforms, the Declaration of Shared Commitments is the result of the efforts by the Secretariat and Member States to advance the reform process. Kuwait and more than 150 countries have pledged, inter alia, to ensure women's participation in all phases of a peace operation, including peacekeeping.

In conclusion, we hope that this discussion in the Council, as well as that in its Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, will contribute to increasing the participation of women in peacekeeping by using various means, including highlighting women as role models in peacekeeping operations, such as in the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, where three women are in command of the Force as well as its military and police components. Since the presidency has encouraged us to cite few examples, I would mention and commend Major General Kristin Lund, who is present with us today. She is a role model for many women in peacekeeping operations, not only because she is the first woman to hold the position of Force Commander but also because in Kuwait we have also recognized her: she has received the Order of Liberation from my country as a token of appreciation to her and to tens of thousands of other women who contributed to the liberation of Kuwait.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, for convening of this meeting and for your participation, Madam German Minister of Defence. We also thank the briefers for their informative presentations.

We consider it essential that the Security Council remain united with regard to the progressive development and implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, since the contribution of women to conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding is no longer merely a useful recommendation, but has become a paradigm for its efficient and necessary implementation.

From that perspective, the increase in the number of female personnel in military and police contingents, as a central part of the Organization's reform process, contributes directly to promoting and crystallizing such participation. Therefore, integrating the gender perspective established by resolution 1325 (2000) makes it possible not only to develop policies that recognize the specific effects of conflict on women, but also to recognize the need to involve women as positive agents in peace processes. We must also express our satisfaction about the organization of joint field visits by United Nations and African Union representatives to observe in detail the relationship among women, peace, security and development, including generating appropriate responses to the scourge of sexual violence in conflict, with a view to continuing to implement

tangible measures to promote women's participation in those processes.

At the same time, the empowerment of women's leadership and enabling them to make proposals are also prerequisites for conflict prevention and a powerful tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. That belief is more than just a theory for us. It is currently embodied in the following commitments: first, in our firm support for systematically incorporating a gender perspective in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, based on specialized training aimed at providing specialized responses to, and protecting the human rights of, women and girls in conflict situations, while promoting their active participation, and, secondly, through a gradual increase, as a troop-contributing country, of women's participation in peace operations, such that the percentage of women staff officers is 30 per cent, of mission experts it is 33 per cent and of military contingents it is 10 per cent of the total number of deployed troops. We have committed to increasing that participation to reach the target of 15 per cent in the category of contingents by 2020. For Peru, that commitment is binding and is complemented by the incorporation of a gender perspective in predeployment training programmes for our troops and military observers. We are pleased that the National Training Centre for Peace Operations in our country has established guidelines for action in that area as a central part of the training of our troops.

We would like to conclude by reiterating our commitment to continuing to work in the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, which we co-chair with Germany, to promote the implementation of this agenda by the Council, in particular as established in the historic resolution 1325 (2000).

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Major General Kristin Lund and Ms. Lorna Merekaje for their succinct briefings on the role of women in peacekeeping.

Just days after the 2019 Peacekeeping Ministerial and as we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), we are meeting in the Chamber today to admit that more Security Council action is required to support the objectives set out in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations of the Action for Peacekeeping

initiative and to advance the women and peace and security agenda. Peacekeeping operations are one of the United Nations most effective tools in promoting and maintaining international peace and security, yet only 4 per cent of uniformed personnel and 22 per cent of civilian personnel are women. That tool will not be effective enough as long as gender inequality persists, and to such a disproportionate degree.

We recognize that significant progress has been made, especially with regard to the decisions set out in Security Council resolutions, which have deployed more gender advisers in United Nations missions, increased the number of women participating in peacekeeping and incorporated a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, but that is not sufficient. There is still a demand for deliberate and sustainable efforts by the Security Council and for the necessary resources to support those efforts. It is very regrettable that initiatives to promote the women and peace and security policy framework, primarily on the ground, continue to be threatened by budget cuts and depend disproportionately upon voluntary extrabudgetary resources.

We vehemently defend the need to link women's rights with peacebuilding, always in line with the Beijing Platform for Action. That is why it is important to train peacekeepers on gender issues and ensure that gender issues are taken into account in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of peace operations. At the same time, there is still a need to include gender-disaggregated data in all mission reports, to deploy gender and women's protection advisers, and to strengthen zero-tolerance policies for acts of sexual and gender-based violence committed by peacekeepers.

Increasing the presence of women among deployed troops opens channels for communication for women and girls in conflict situations, addresses their protection concerns and immediate needs and encourages them to participate and lead. There is no doubt that the presence of women raises awareness about their problems, but it is also a critical factor in increasing the operational effectiveness of all tasks and improving the image, accessibility and credibility of the missions among the local population. The women deployed in missions are familiar with the local protection strategies that affect them; they are able to act as an early-warning mechanism; they interact more effectively with the people; and they have a comparative advantage in

interacting with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and in the process of demobilization and reintegration into civilian life.

In order to achieve gender parity in missions, it is essential to work closely with troop-contributing countries. Although in recent decades an increasing number of countries have raised the percentage of women in their armed forces and adopted measures in their national military institutions on gender policies, at the same time various constraints remain, such as the persistent abuse and discrimination suffered by women within national military institutions in many countries. In that regard, we understand that troop-contributing countries should take measures aimed at increasing the level of female representation, such as implementing specific legislative reforms to encourage the participation of women and combat harassment and sexual abuse within the military; eliminating barriers and the exclusion of women from some categories of military personnel; making changes to family policy, as well as ensuring the proper training of personnel on gender issues before deployment, in accordance with United Nations standards.

It is also imperative that United Nations missions prioritize visible and tangible respect for women's physical well-being and safety. It is therefore essential to review the planning and budget of all missions to make life in them more suitable for women, such as by incorporating health facilities, specialized medical care, including access to sexual and reproductive health services, special licensing arrangements and investment in the internal security of bases.

We commend the work being done by the Department of Peace Operations, primarily its gender unit, to ensure that women's priorities are central to peace and security decisions at all levels. We call for the continued use of gender-based analysis to better assess progress against the goals and commitments of the women and peace and security agenda and, in doing so, improve the design, conduct and performance of United Nations missions. We believe that the United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award is a recognition of the efforts of peacekeepers in promoting the principles of resolution 1325 (2000). We take this opportunity to congratulate Brazilian Lieutenant Commander Marcia Andrade Braga for having received that award as a result of her work with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

Nonetheless, earlier this year we are also pleased to have witnessed a milestone in the history of the United Nations, in the peace mission in Cyprus, which is being led by three women — a special representative, a force commander and a senior police adviser — overseeing a contingent of more than 1,000 people including police, military and civilians monitoring the ceasefire line and working to find a political solution between Greece and the Turkish Cypriots.

Investing in gender equity and the empowerment of women is the crucial way to prevent and end conflicts, as well as to build peace and prosperity in the world. Without a doubt, the face of peace is a woman.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I welcome you, Madam President, to New York. It is good to see you presiding over today's meeting.

I would like to thank Secretary-General Guterres, Major General Lund and Ms. Lorna Merekaje, the representative of South Sudanese civil society, for their briefings.

Since its inception 71 years ago, United Nations peacekeeping has played an important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Female peacekeepers have always played an active role. They serve in various mission areas, conducting patrols, standing guard and treating patients. They bring hope for peace to local people, in particular women and children. I would like to pay tribute all of the women in United Nations peacekeeping.

Chinese women have never been absent from United Nations peacekeeping. I have a few photos to share with members. The first one is of doctors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working and fulfilling the mission's mandate. The second photo is of female police officers in Liberia. The third photo shows female medical workers treating patients in Libya. There are several moving examples and stories in that regard. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at the Chinese level 2 peacekeeping hospital there are three Chinese female peacekeepers on their second tour in the country. In the eyes of fellow peacekeepers and the local people, they are truly like angels. They have treated fellow peacekeepers in urgent need of care late at night. They provide humanitarian assistance to local women and children. Their outstanding medical skills, high sense of responsibility and spirit of internationalism have won them trust and acclaim.

In South Sudan, more than 10 female soldiers of the Chinese infantry battalion perform tasks such as security, long-distance patrols and joint search. They also impart knowledge on hygiene and on preventing epidemics in local communities. They engage with school children and actively conduct civil-military cooperation. A local orphan boy named James still remembers, even today, that the name of the helpful Chinese female peacekeeper is Yian.

In Haiti, a Chinese female police officer was tragically killed in the line of duty, leaving a 4-year-old child and an elderly parent. In her diary, she wrote,

“In this vast world, I may be as insignificant as a feather. Nevertheless, in my small and humble way, I wish to carry forward the aspiration for peace”.

It is with that same aspiration that over the past 30 years close to 1,000 Chinese female peacekeepers have left for mission areas, without hesitation, to implement the mandate for peace.

The main goal of United Nations peacekeeping is to promote political settlement to conflicts and achieve early peace and stability in mission areas. Therefore, all our activities must serve that main goal. Strengthening the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping requires joint efforts from the Security Council, the Secretariat, the troop- and police-contributing countries and host countries. The corresponding efforts should be guided by the Charter of the United Nations and the basic principles of peacekeeping. It requires a holistic approach with efforts in various areas, such as political settlement, logistical support, personnel safety and partnership.

Conditions must be created to facilitate broader women's participation in peacekeeping. The international community should strengthen communication to increase support for women's participation in peacekeeping. In terms of the training of peacekeepers, deployment and field operations, a favourable environment should be created for women's participation. Attention should be given to the national conditions and situations in troop-contributing countries (TCCs) so as to gradually increase women's participation in peacekeeping. Such efforts can begin with a trial to determine best practices before such practices can be replicated on a broader scale. Expanding women's participation in peacekeeping requires the concerted efforts of all parties. Developed countries should increase their participation in United

Nations peacekeeping and demonstrate their support for women's participation with genuine action. The Secretariat should increase its cooperation with TCCs and develop targeted training plans to help TCCs strengthen the relevant capacity-building. China supports the Action for Peacekeeping initiative of Secretary-General Guterres.

China is a major supporter of, and participant in, peacekeeping. We are also a main TCC and financial contributor to eight mission areas with Chinese peacekeepers, of which Chinese female peacekeepers serve in six, including in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali. China is working not only to expand the participation of Chinese female peacekeepers but also to help other countries in that regard. In recent years the Chinese Minister of Defence and UN-Women have jointly organized international training seminars for female peacekeeping officers in Beijing to help increase women's participation in peacekeeping operations. Together with the broader international community, we will continue to actively participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations in order to make a greater contribution to world peace.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour to have you, the German Federal Minister of Defence, among us today, Madam President, presiding over the Security Council during the joint presidencies of the Council. France and Germany have made the women and peace and security agenda a top priority, as demonstrated by our open debate with you as President today. We are particularly grateful to you for that. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Major General Kristin Lund and Ms. Lorna Merekaje for their very insightful briefings and their commitment to the women and peace and security agenda, which are a source of inspiration for us. I would like to reiterate our full support to the Secretary-General and his team for the ambitious and effective strategy that he has put in place to achieve parity within the United Nations.

I also associate myself with the statements to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women and Peace and Security. The Security Council should step up its efforts to still further integrate the women and peace and security agenda into peacekeeping operations. Significant progress has been made but we must do more to truly place that agenda at the centre of peacekeeping operations.

In mandates, that integration covers several realities: from prevention and protection against sexual violence in times of conflict to women's participation in political processes. We must continue to promote that comprehensive approach in particular by ensuring the deployment of gender and women protection advisers. We all know that that is an ongoing task both in the Council and the Fifth Committee. During a ministerial meeting on the margins of the General Assembly, the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, recalled that peacekeepers "engage in situations in which no nation is ready to engage alone". We must therefore ensure that the necessary training and logistical support are provided not only to those men but also increasingly to the women who are committed to peace.

Secondly, the increasing participation of women in peacekeeping operations is essential to the success of our agenda and to peacekeeping operations themselves. As is clearly documented, the increased participation of women directly helps to strengthen the effectiveness of operations. It is true that in all fields, across the board, the added value is particularly strong in areas such as access to local communities and victims' access to care and justice, to take just two examples among many others. More generally, no position should be reserved only for men.

Progress has been made but it is still insufficient. That must be said. There are still 27 units without women, compared to 49 last year. Women represent 5 per cent of the troops and 8 per cent of the police contingents, which is still far from the goals set by the Council. It is primarily the troop-contributing countries that should fully assume that responsibility. The feminization rate of French troops in peacekeeping operations was 5.5 per cent in 2018, which is already a higher rate than the United Nations target of 5.25 per cent for 2019. In February, the rate was 8.4 per cent. That is significant progress but, of course, much remains to be done. We are the first to say it, including with regard to us. We must in particular increase the number of women appointed to staff officer positions.

For States to assume that responsibility, as you, Madam President, said, they must lead a real paradigm shift in their national armies. That is what France is firmly doing, with conditions and in a voluntary way. The French army now has one of the highest levels of women's participation in the world, with a rate of 20 per cent overall and 15.5 per cent for military personnel.

France wants to go further. On 7 March, the eve of International Women's Rights Day, the Minister of the Armed Forces, your colleague Florence Parly, announced a gender-equity plan to support France's operational performance, which has three main objectives: to recruit women, to retain them throughout their careers and to promote gender diversity in the armed forces. Those goals will be achieved through very concrete measures, such as women's participation in military leadership or a new approach to access to ranks and responsibilities.

As our Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Le Drian, recalled, the involvement of women in our national army and peace operations will be integrated into our third national plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000), which is currently being drafted, and specific cooperation actions will be undertaken in that direction. France also supports the participation of women in police and military training schools in several African countries, including courses on violence against women and girls and on the role of women in mediation.

Member States can count on France to continue to actively promote women's participation in peacekeeping operations and in the overall women and peace and security agenda. The President of the Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, expressed the wish that equality between women and men, a major national cause of the five-year period, would also become a major international cause. That was a priority goal of our presidency of the Security Council in March. It is also a priority of our current presidency of the Group of Seven. The anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020 and the Beijing + 25 forum, which will take place in France the same year, provide a unique opportunity to give a fresh impetus to that agenda, despite the odds, and to ultimately enable its full implementation.

To echo the words of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, we should all be feminists, including those on the Security Council. The agenda that we are discussing today is at the heart of the revolution currently under way within the United Nations to promote the role of women and parity on every front. That revolution is of course essential in itself, but also for the success of multilateralism, to which we are committed now more than ever. That is to say how much France intends to continue to be a driver of this revolution, which nothing and no one can stop.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today's open debate and for being with us in the Council this morning. I would also like to thank our briefers today.

I reaffirm the United States commitment to the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in the United Nations peacekeeping operations. With its Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, the United States became the first country to translate resolution 1325 (2000) into national law. That historic milestone demonstrates the commitment and leadership of the United States regarding the agenda on women and peace and security. We are also advocates for improving peacekeeping performance in general, and increasing the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping is at the heart of performance. Security Council resolutions 2242 (2015) and 2436 (2018), as well as the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, charge us to expand opportunities for women in peacekeeping.

As many previous speakers have affirmed, women improve the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping missions and can be important role models, both in the communities where they are deployed and within their own national systems, but we still have much work to do in overcoming their sparse participation in military contingents, police units and civilian support forces, let alone in addressing the paucity of uniformed women in the higher ranks of peacekeeping operations. The United States continues to work with troop- and police-contributing countries through its Global Peace Operations Initiative and International Police Peacekeeping Operations Support programme, which strengthen international capacity and capabilities for executing United Nations and regional peace operations. More than 11,000 female military and police personnel have already participated in United States peacekeeping training events.

In our Global Peace Operations Initiative partner countries, we are also investing in infrastructure, among other things by building women's barracks and latrines and removing barriers to women's effective participation and peacekeeping training. Our partner countries have increased the number of women military peacekeepers deployed to United Nations peace operations by 89 per cent since 2010, compared to a 7 per cent increase among countries that are not partners in the Initiative. The International Police Peacekeeping Operations Support programme has funded United

Nations-led workshops for women peacekeeping police candidates, with a focus on improving communications, investigating and report-writing, driving and firearms skills. Since 2014 we have increased the number of francophone women police eligible to deploy to United Nations missions, almost doubling the number recommended for deployment from 36 per cent to more than 50 per cent.

We encourage all Member States to adopt and revise, where appropriate, national action plans and strategies on women and peace and security. These important tools serve to catalyse commitments to increase the number of women in peacekeeping and enhance their recruitment, retention and deployment. We welcome the uniformed gender-parity strategy of the Department of Peace Operations for increasing the number of women in the military and police contingents of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We urge troop- and police-contributing countries and all other stakeholders in peacekeeping to support the strategy's objectives.

Individually, we should all be taking steps to address the persistent barriers facing women peacekeepers and to overcome those impediments in our systems. Collectively, we should remove those barriers and advance the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping through our resolutions and programmes. Success depends on our determined, coordinated efforts to improve peacekeepers' performance by championing women's participation in all aspects of our peacekeeping efforts.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): I would like to join other members, Madam President, in thanking you for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank the briefers, and particularly Major General Kristin Lund for her championing of the cause of women peacekeepers. Our women peacekeepers have been working closely with her and I urge her to continue that good work.

I also want to commend and welcome the newly launched gender-parity strategy for uniformed personnel, which aims to double the number of women in military and police contingents by 2020 and beyond. Through resolution 2242 (2015), the Security Council and the Secretariat have shown us a good example of how they can work together to improve the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping. Building on that effort, Indonesia would like to highlight the following points.

The first is about the importance of a strong national regulatory framework. At the national level, in 2015 our Government issued a ministerial decree on a road map vision for the period from 2015 to 2019 of 4,000 peacekeepers that established the legal framework for our aspiration to deploy up to 4,000 Indonesian personnel in peacekeeping operations. It was updated in 2017 to include a more comprehensive strategy aimed at increasing women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping. The road map outlined detailed steps and checklists for action to be taken on a yearly basis from 2015 to 2019. For this year in particular, we are deepening our focus on the required skill sets, in accordance with the missions' needs in the field, and we are intensifying our efforts to increase the numbers of female peacekeepers at United Nations Headquarters and in missions.

The second is about the political will to build capacity and pledge more women for deployment. More than 3,000 Indonesian peacekeepers, including 86 female personnel, are currently serving in eight United Nations peacekeeping missions. That figure puts Indonesia in the top eight contributing countries and makes it the number-one troop-contributing country among Security Council members. We also hope it will increase our ranking in terms of women peacekeepers deployed. To encourage and prepare more of its able female peacekeepers, Indonesia has incorporated the issue of gender in United Nations peacekeeping as part of the regular curriculum at its peacekeeping training centre in West Java. In order to increase our contribution, we are currently in the process of sending one formed police unit of 140 personnel, including 14 women police officers, to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, as well as 81 individual police officers vetted by the United Nations Selection Assistance and Assessment Team process, 26 of whom are women police officers, who will be deployed to various missions. We are also exploring the possibility of including more female personnel in other recently pledged units, such as military police companies, explosive-ordnance-disposal and counter-improvised-explosive-device teams, aeromedical evacuation teams and transportation companies. In short, there are no fields that should be closed to women, because they can do everything.

The third is that a sound strategy is imperative. We are mindful of the challenges. More often than not,

missions' infrastructure renders peacekeeping less attractive to female personnel. In addition, we also face the reality of structural and sociocultural challenges that should be minimized or removed altogether, whether at the United Nations, in missions or in contributing countries. Adequate resources should be made available. Troop costs should be adequate to meeting the specific needs of female peacekeepers, supporting much-needed predeployment training, the provision of advanced gender-sensitive equipment and facilities and the creation of a receptive environment for women personnel in missions. I heard all of that in talking to our women peacekeepers in the field. That is what they need, as I think Major General Lund knows very well. Indonesia will work to incorporate those perspectives into the cost data to be collected and considered in the context of the next troop-costs review.

We also welcome new initiatives to enhance training and capacity-building in order to improve and build the capacity of female personnel. As was already mentioned, on 8 and 9 April Mrs. Retno Marsudi, Indonesia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, hosted a regional meeting in Djakarta on women and peace and security with the intention of creating a global network of peacekeepers, starting from a regional base. The understanding is that women as agents of peace have an important role to play in peacekeeping operations. Female peacekeepers possess better situational awareness, provide a sense of comfort and protection for civilians in dealing with sexual and gender-based violence, and are able to communicate with children harmed by conflicts. In short, they can win the hearts and minds of local communities and civilians. Mrs. Marsudi has also floated the idea of establishing a global coalition of women for peace and tolerance made up of female peacekeepers and women negotiators and mediators. It is high time for women to be more visible and in the forefront in carrying the banners of peace.

In conclusion, we agree with the Secretary-General's point that there is clear evidence showing that a greater number of women peacekeepers leads to better protection responses and can make significant differences. Indonesia believes that women peacekeepers can do anything, anytime, anywhere for the cause of peace. Moreover, with reference to what my brother the Ambassador of the Dominican Republic mentioned, when he remarked that peace has a woman's face, I should like to add that peace also has a woman's touch.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like first to thank Germany for organizing this debate, Madam President.

Belgium welcomes the uniformed gender-parity strategy of January 2019 adopted in accordance with resolution 2242 (2015). The number of women serving under the United Nations flag is growing, but as the Secretary-General has said, we must do more. In 2019, 4 per cent of peacekeepers and 8 per cent of female police officers in United Nations operations are women. We must indeed do more, and do better, at every level of the hierarchy and in every function. Targeting the hiring process is not enough. Women must be able to pursue their careers with the same opportunities as men. I would like to briefly discuss some possible solutions.

First, we must overcome the obstacles related to deployment. Deployment conditions must be adapted to female candidates' professional and personal needs. Among measures to be taken on the ground, I especially have in mind infrastructure and medical services that are appropriate for women. That also applies to deployment periods. In that regard, the role of gender advisers is crucial.

Secondly, we must encourage troop contributors to deploy more women to operations. Troop- and police-contributing countries should deploy more women, in line with the commitments made under the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, but we realize that this is still a big challenge. Belgium is above average in terms of the percentage of women it deploys to United Nations operations, but at the national level we are aware that we still need to make progress. Women make up only 8 per cent of the 27,000 active military personnel in the Belgian armed forces. The image of a world of men in this regard is a tenacious one. We have begun recruitment campaigns to attract more young women, and I want to highlight a fundamental principle in our armed forces, which is equality. Women have the same opportunities as men in the areas of recruitment, training, compensation, promotions and operational deployment. This year, for example, the Belgian armed forces proposed the creation of a mixed-gender engagement team within the Belgian special forces, which should be effective beginning in 2020.

Thirdly, it is important to create a healthy environment for women in operations. A masculine culture in the military and the police is an obstacle to women's participation. Cases of harassment and sexual

exploitation and abuse contribute to an environment that women perceive as toxic or dangerous. Belgium has been taking action in that regard. We have signed the voluntary compact with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the commitment to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse. Our Prime Minister participates in the Circle of Leadership created by the Secretary-General. We are funding a centre for sexual-abuse victims' rights within the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. We all have a responsibility to establish a transparent and accessible accountability system. We must continue to provide training in the prevention of harassment and protection. The code of *omertà* must be broken, and practical methods must be put in place to enable people to denounce such actions in full confidence.

Finally, we must promote the women and peace and security agenda in the Council generally. The Security Council should continue to emphasize the essential role of women throughout the cycles of conflict, from prevention to peacebuilding. The women and peace and security agenda is rich and ever-evolving. Women are agents for change all over the world. The demands are strong, and civil society often shows us the way. The Council must be up to the task. We have a responsibility, particularly in translating those demands into the mandates of peacekeeping operations, for example by supporting women's protection advisers in missions. Excluding half of humankind from peace efforts amounts to preparing oneself for failure. Belgium is convinced that gender equality is an essential element in achieving lasting peace and security.

Mrs. Gilmutdinova (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing today's open debate devoted to issues related to women's participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We thank Secretary-General António Guterres, Major General Kristin Lund, Head of Mission of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, and Ms. Lorna Merekaje for their views.

We firmly believe in the substantial positive potential of women's participation in various aspects of the settlement of armed conflicts and peacebuilding, including within the framework of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We would like to point out that since the Security Council's adoption in 2000 of resolution 1325 (2000), the first of a series of resolutions on women and peace and security, the joint efforts of the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries have

been fostering a steady increase in the role and number of women peacekeepers in the military and police components of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We agree with the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for women participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations and of removing structural barriers. At the same time, increasing the number of women in field missions should not be an end in itself. It is crucial that the process of involving women in peacekeeping activities be conducted thoughtfully, based on the actual requirements of a specific presence on the ground. Professional qualities, rather than artificial indicators aimed at achieving a particular ratio of women to men, must also be taken into account. In that respect, we would like to caution against the excessive use of temporary special measures to increase numbers of women peacekeepers, since lowering the bar, for instance in the area of rank, can also discriminate against men. What sort of gender equality or equal opportunities can we talk about in such circumstances? The specifics for each country's presence also have to be taken into account, including the security conditions for conducting operations.

It goes without saying that both women and men bring their own particular advantages that should be used rationally. For example, women peacekeepers may be more effective in establishing contacts with the local population, especially women and children, because they elicit a greater sense of trust and protection. Such efforts are needed when investigating cases of sexual violence where the victims may be more open with women peacekeepers. However, we must not forget that peacekeeping is also related to military action and its concomitant risks, particularly when it involves tasks that require physical strength. In order to increase women's involvement in peacekeeping, it is important to create favourable conditions that take into account their particular requirements. We know that at one stage or another women are often forced to give up peacekeeping work in order to deal with family concerns and caring for children and relatives. This is generally related to the impossibility of combining their work and family life on the ground, and to the insecurity of their environment. Such factors will have to be taken into account in the Secretariat's future implementation of its gender policy. It is also essential to comply with the principle of fair geographical representation in appointing women, including to leadership positions in the Department of Peace Operations.

We should also remember that the primary responsibility for increasing the number of women in the military components of peacekeeping forces belongs to States themselves. It is therefore important to consider the opinions of the troop-contributing countries themselves in this regard and each country's national approach to staffing. The natural problems that may arise in achieving one or another indicator should not be a criterion for making decisions about the deployment of particular contingents.

The Russian Federation has been providing peacekeepers to United Nations peacekeeping operations for more than 45 years. Our current percentage of women is at least 17 per cent, and our women peacekeepers are working in the United Nations missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kosovo, South Sudan, Western Sahara and Cyprus. We are pleased that they are highly rated for their service in the various United Nations peacekeeping missions. We also have a wealth of experience in training peacekeepers, including women, at United Nations-certified training centres, particularly the All-Russian Institute for Advanced Training of Employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation in Domodedovo, which has continued to train foreign law-enforcement officers every year, with the broad participation of women. We will continue to provide all possible assistance to building the capacities of United Nations peacekeeping.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Let me start by saying how proud I am that the United Kingdom has already met and exceeded the United Nations target set in 2015 for doubling female participation in peacekeeping by 2020. Women currently make up 7 per cent of our contingent peacekeeping troops and 18 per cent of military observers and staff offices. This is not just a point of principle or about simply saying the right thing. It is about effectiveness. Just as in our countries we suffer economically if we do not let all of our population participate in the workforce, so we suffer militarily if we exclude women from our armed forces and from promotion within them. We prevent ourselves from getting the best people for the job by limiting the pool available, and we therefore limit our fighting ability.

On the ground, aside from having the best available troops, we see real operational benefits from deploying more gender-balanced forces. As others have, we note that deploying more peacekeepers enables missions

to engage with a wider range of people in local communities, which in turn leads to better situational awareness. Asking peacekeepers to understand local conflict dynamics and risks without the ability to engage effectively with local women is like asking them to patrol with one eye closed. Having more female peacekeepers in missions can also make it easier for women and girls who have survived sexual violence in conflict, or sexual exploitation and abuse, to come forward and speak about their experiences.

But we do recognize and share the challenges that most national militaries face in achieving gender parity. Women still make up only 10.5 per cent of the United Kingdom's regular armed forces and only 13 per cent of military officers. Examples set by trailblazing women such as Air Marshal Sue Gray, who became the first three-star female officer in the Royal Air Force this year, have yet to become the norm. So although we are proud of the progress we have made in increasing female participation in the United Kingdom's armed forces and, by extension, in our peacekeeping contributions, we know that there is much more to do. Having said earlier that this is not about just saying the right thing, it is about doing things, I would like to set out a few things that we think should happen.

We must keep changing mindsets, ensuring that expanding women's participation is seen as an essential operational enabler and part of the core function of a mission, not as a box-ticking exercise. We must keep taking concrete action to ensure that women have equal opportunities to participate in peacekeeping. That must include equal access to information about opportunities to deploy, equal opportunities to develop relevant skills and experience and equal access to adequate accommodation, facilities, equipment and medical services in the field. The United Kingdom supports innovative approaches to tackling those and other barriers to women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping. We are committed to focusing on practical action, sharing best practices and lessons learned and continuing to learn from other troop- and police-contributing nations. To that end, as we announced on the margins of the United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial, the United Kingdom is contributing \$1.3 million to the newly launched Elsie Initiative on Women in Peace Operations, and we fully support the Elsie fund's focus on incentivizing and assisting Member States in deploying more trained

and qualified uniformed women and maximizing the impact of women's participation.

It is important that we increase the number and proportion of women in peacekeeping, but of course all peacekeepers, male and female, share a responsibility to conduct peacekeeping operations in a gender-sensitive manner, and we are determined to equip our peacekeepers with the skills, knowledge and understanding that this requires. Since November 2016, all United Kingdom military personnel deploying on major international operations have received training on preventing sexual violence in conflict and on the women and peace and security agenda. As a training partner, we are committed to ensuring that the training that we offer personnel from other countries is gender-sensitive.

Incorporating gender perspectives in peacekeeping does not concern women alone. Gender equality is everybody's business. We all stand to gain from more effective, inclusive peacekeeping if we redouble our efforts to achieve high-ambition targets for women's participation. Flowing from that, I have a question for our briefers, which is simply to ask, in the spirit of taking action, what are the most urgent interventions that they would recommend the United Nations and Member States adopt to make mission environments more women-friendly? What are the best examples of best practices that they have seen in use at the national level to really enable that agenda to make progress?

The President: I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I also want to inform everyone that we will be carrying on this open debate through the lunch hour, as we have a very large number of speakers to hear this afternoon on this important topic.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary): Thank you, Madam President, for giving us the opportunity to express our views about this very important topic, although I have to be very careful since I represent a small country whose army is not one of the world's most powerful. I will therefore try to make my remarks modest and humble.

Regardless of size, we are a responsible member of the international community and have always been committed to contributing to the success of peacekeeping operations. We recently celebrated the twentieth anniversary of our accession to NATO, and when we looked at our track record, we were proud to see that we have not only received the benefits of belonging to the Alliance but have been able to contribute to its success as well. Similarly, when we look at our track record in United Nations peacekeeping, I can say that we have contributed and will continue to contribute to the success of our common efforts, since we consider peacekeeping one of the most important functions of the United Nations. We should, of course, implement reforms, and we are ready to take part in that, especially since we consider peacekeeping a vital instrument for tackling the root causes of migration, which is currently a major challenge all over the world. We can see that if we can prevent the occurrence of situations that force people to flee their homes, we may ultimately succeed not in managing migratory flows but stopping them altogether.

The Hungarian Government recently decided to increase the number of our troops serving abroad from 1,000 to 1,200, which will enable us to increase the numbers of our peacekeepers within the United Nations framework as well. Since that decision was taken, we have begun withdrawing from the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. I can now announce that we will be deploying 60 additional peacekeepers to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Our peacekeepers will serve in sector west in Lebanon under Italian command. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to express our respect for the Government and the people of Lebanon in their work of caring for millions of refugees and making enormous efforts to ensure their country's stability and thereby have a positive impact on the region.

We see great opportunities for the involvement of police forces in international peacekeeping operations. Our police forces in the Western Balkans are very well trained and are helping countries in the region protect their own borders. Those are not classic peacekeeping operations, but keeping borders properly protected definitely helps keep the peace.

We recognize the role of women in those operations. In Hungary 20 per cent of the staff of the armed forces and 23 per cent of the police forces are women. Based on those figures, we are clearly committed to the

implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and are interested in understanding best practices, or, in particular, as the representative of the United Kingdom said, the best of the best. We have not so far drafted a national action plan, but I am happy to announce that our armed forces guidelines on the matter are already in preparation.

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

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): Let me say, Madam President, that we are honoured by your personal presence here today. In honour of the German presidency of the Security Council this month, let me also try to thank you in German: *Vielen Dank, Frau Vorsitzende*.

We align ourselves with the statement to be delivered later today by the observer of the European Union.

We express deep appreciation to Germany and France for making the women and peace and security agenda a priority of their joint presidencies. We would also like to thank the German presidency for bringing more light and transparency to this gathering by opening the curtains and for its tremendous efforts for better timekeeping.

We also applaud the Secretary-General for his statement this morning and for his leadership. We thank him for giving the issue of equal participation so much prominence in the important Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Having listened to other speakers this morning, we are pleased that we agree that we are no longer debating why more women should be involved in peace operations but are specifically discussing the question of how we can make that happen. Barriers to female participation differ across missions and across individual troop-contributing countries (TCCs). But the issue itself concerns us all.

In the Kingdom of the Netherlands we have just celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of female participation in the armed forces. In that light, I am honoured that two female Dutch officers are members of my delegation today. We acknowledge that we have made progress in the past 75 years, but we realize that in the Kingdom of the Netherlands we still struggle to get the numbers right. That is an issue I have also heard my colleagues discussing today. In trying to address the “how” question, I will focus on three issues: first, a full analysis of the existing barriers; secondly,

translating our findings into action; and, thirdly, matching action with training.

On the first point, analysis of the existing barriers, there was a very good baseline study last year by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. The study details the current barriers that women face in assuming military and police roles in United Nations peace operations. That itself was a positive step, but more needs to be done. We need to listen better to the real experts — women — when researching the current obstacles to their participation. All of us have heard stories of women becoming dehydrated because they stop drinking fluids in order to avoid a risky night-time trip to the toilet. That is unacceptable. We must work together to end those kinds of situations. The recently launched Elsie Initiative Fund will allow for additional research into TCC- and mission-specific barriers. That will enable us to develop targeted policy and interventions in response. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a proud supporter of the Elsie Initiative Fund, and we encourage other Member States to follow suit.

That brings me to my second point, translating research into action. We need to bring down the barriers to equal participation, both at home and in missions. It is not rocket science. A lot can be achieved by simple measures — increasing efforts to recruit more women, appointing national gender advisers, creating gender-responsive criteria for deployment and providing adequate camp accommodation and equipment. Furthermore, it is not only about the hardware; the software in our minds, the culture, is also important. We need to create a culture in which we listen and are responsive to gender-specific needs. The Secretary-General is doing that through his uniformed gender-parity strategy, which we welcome, and we call on everyone to support it.

My third, and last, point is this — in order to achieve the necessary change in culture we need proper gender training throughout the military curriculum, including predeployment and deployment training itself. We need to instil a gender-responsive attitude across all mission pillars and personnel. That applies to both women and men. We do that in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, for example, by means of a gender-in-operations course. It is also about the numbers. To get the numbers right at the United Nations, we support the female military officers course. We hope that more countries can do that as well.

In conclusion, improving our missions' effectiveness through increased female participation is crucial for our efforts to modernize United Nations peacekeeping. Increasing female participation featured prominently in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, which we signed last September. Let us redouble our efforts to make increased female participation a reality. It is time for us to walk the talk.

May I also say to Major General Lund that we are inspired both by her presence in the Chamber today and by the fact that she is a role model for many of us, and certainly for the military in my country.

The President: Before we proceed, as our briefers are leaving soon, I would like to give them an opportunity to answer a few questions that have been posed.

I now give the floor to Major General Lund.

Major General Lund: I thank the President for this opportunity to take the floor again, and I thank participants for all the good input so far. It is good to see that there is a lot of momentum on this topic in the Security Council, even if, as one who is in the field, I can say that the numbers are saying something else.

In answer to the question from the representative of the United Kingdom, I think the first and most important action is to get the numbers up. Numbers matter when we are out there. Secondly, every camp and position must be able to accommodate both genders. I did it myself, within two years. It was possible — and that was for all 26 positions, or camps. Thirdly, it has not been mentioned by many people that men need to be champions in the promotion of gender equality. We need more men to talk to men, because, most likely, they have a better way of communicating with each other than I do. Those are my three points.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Merekaje.

Ms. Merekaje: I wish to express my appreciation for everyone's comments. We are making progress. We are heading somewhere. I would like to say that, first, there is a need to improve on the facilities so that we are able to retain those who are already in peacekeeping missions. Secondly, we need to strengthen mentorship programmes so that we are able to prepare more young women to take up roles in peacekeeping operations. Thirdly, the troop- and police-contributing countries need to look at their in-country legislation so that they

are able to create environments that encourage young women to join the service.

The standards for joining the service should be set out for young women so that they are prepared to meet the required standards for service. We have seen cases where young women have encountered an obstacle to serving in a mission because they do not know how to drive a manual vehicle. If that requirement were to be made clear in advance, then young women would be able to prepare themselves to qualify and join the service. In that way we will be able to get more women in the service and they can then qualify to go on peacekeeping missions.

I would like to excuse myself because I have to catch up with the curfew outside.

The President: I thank both our briefers for their concrete proposals drawn from their broad experience.

I would now like to proceed by giving the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): Viet Nam commends the German presidency for having convened today's debate on women in peacekeeping operations. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his insightful briefing.

Viet Nam is convinced that women are active, key players and agents of peace who make unique and substantive contributions to lasting peace in conflict areas. Their important roles can be strongly felt in a number of aspects.

Female peacekeepers can have access to parts of populations and areas that are usually closed off to men. They can provide a presence within local communities that empowers women and girls in host communities, giving opportunities for United Nations missions to address the gender-specific issues and needs that women and girls face. They can act as role models for women and girls in male-dominated societies to further push for their rights and participation in peace processes, including joining national security sectors, thus in turn potentially increasing the number of women participating in peace operations.

Greater gender parity can also lead to a reduction in sexual exploitation and abuse, crimes that have weakened support for peacekeeping operations. According to a recent study, a small increase in the number of women in military peacekeeping units can

reduce abuse allegations by more than half. Viet Nam is also of the view that women participating in peace operations continue to face many obstacles that can bar them from reaching their full potential while in missions and even prevent them from joining in the first place. Viet Nam therefore wishes to make the following recommendations.

First, resolution 2242 (2015) should be further effectively implemented.

Secondly, we propose that the Secretary-General conduct thorough research on country-specific barriers to women's participation in security forces and their deployment as peacekeepers, and we recommend an overarching framework of solutions for troop- and police-contributing Member States that could be based on the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028 submitted by the Department of Peace Operations.

Thirdly, we encourage developed countries to increase their support to the Elsie Initiative Fund to help accelerate progress towards achieving the targets to increase the proportion of women serving in uniformed military and police units.

And last but not least, it is important to underline the need for United Nations peacekeeping missions to abide by the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, consent of the parties, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

Since 2014, Viet Nam has been sending its military officers to United Nations peacekeeping operations in South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Vietnamese women are committed to greater participation in peacekeeping at all levels and in key positions. Throughout Viet Nam's history, Vietnamese women have played an important role in both national defence and national construction. In October 2017, the first female Vietnamese peacekeeper, a major, joined the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). One year later, in October 2018, Viet Nam deployed its first level-2 field hospital to South Sudan, with 10 women among its staff. We strive to continue this positive trend.

I wish to thank you, Madam President, and I also wish to pay tribute to all peacekeepers around the world for their contributions to and sacrifices for international peace, security and prosperity.

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

Mr. Castañeda Solares (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the German presidency of the Security Council for having convened this open debate and for having circulated the concept note (S/2018/293, annex) that will serve as a basis for our discussions. We also appreciate the briefings delivered on this very important topic.

The full and significant participation by female military and police personnel and civilian experts in United Nations peacekeeping operations contributes to the greater credibility and more effective implementation of the mandates handed down by the Security Council. It also represents an important message about the progress made towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in host-country communities, encouraging their participation in the process of the establishment and building of peace.

Resolution 1325 (2000) set a precedent in recognizing the crucial role of women in the promotion of international peace and security. As Member States, our focus in the context of this resolution should not be limited only to setting a baseline in reference points but also include practical ways of promoting women's participation in conflict prevention, peace negotiations and post-conflict recovery.

Experience has shown that women have made invaluable contributions to peacebuilding, particularly in the recovery of local economies, post-conflict planning and the restoration of governance. For these reasons, we believe in the need to continue joining forces within the United Nations system to continue giving fresh impetus to resolution 1325 (2000), particularly as regards prevention, under the concept of sustaining peace, based on those resolutions that reaffirm the peacebuilding architecture.

It is clear that if women are not involved in the drawing up of national policies, societies will not move forward. It is therefore necessary to eliminate inequalities and ensure that woman's abilities are no longer excluded. In this regard, we reiterate the fact that actions to ensure the empowerment of women are instruments that promote the development of States and that public policies must therefore ensure the mainstreaming of a gender parity and equality focus.

As a United Nations troop-contributing country, Guatemala is honoured to participate by deploying troops in areas of armed conflict. Over recent years, we have deployed more than 300 women officers to posts that include military observers, staff officers, assistant staff officers, logistical support staff, platoon commanders, doctors, interpreters, office workers and investigation specialists, which attests to the commitment and the potential of Guatemalan women to seek peaceful and comprehensive solutions to conflicts. Many of these women promoted projects that had a positive impact in Haiti and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

To that crucial end, Guatemala, through its regional peacekeeping operations training centre, has provided training that focuses on protection, special needs and human rights, specifically regarding women and children in conflict and post-conflict situations. We have also promoted the participation of women in international courses offered by the Organization.

To conclude, I would like to underscore the fact that Guatemala is closing the inequality gap in the firm belief that women contribute added value to this noble task. We therefore will continue to promote actions through our national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), with the goal of increasing and strengthening women's participation, particularly in key and decision-making posts. It is a source of pride and an honour for Guatemala to contribute women staff; we will continue to do so because we are a country that is committed to peace.

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

Ms. Vasquez Muñoz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Mr. President, I wish to express our gratitude to Germany for having convened this debate and for giving such high priority to the women and peace and security agenda during your presidency.

Women and girls make up more than half of the world's population, and their vital contribution to inclusive societies is very important and means that they have a real role to play in conflict prevention and in peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

The absence of women in peace processes and negotiations has exacerbated economic, social and gender inequalities, as well as the political and social discrimination that already exist in post-conflict

societies. That can no longer be tolerated. It is fitting that the Security Council reaffirm the important role that women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding and that it emphasize repeatedly the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all initiatives for maintaining and promoting peace and security.

Almost 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we have strengthened a relevant legal and political framework in the form of the women and peace and security agenda. It is nevertheless necessary to make greater efforts to ensure the effective, coherent and cross-cutting implementation of the gender perspective throughout the United Nations system and to address the practical and political marginalization that persists with regard to the meaningful participation of women in all areas and at all levels of decision-making, including the maintenance of international peace and security.

The number of women participating in peace operations continues to remain at unacceptably low levels — they account for only 4 per cent of military personnel and 10 per cent of police personnel. We therefore commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to implement his gender parity strategy throughout the United Nations system, as well as the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, which Mexico endorses, so as to increase the number of civilian and uniformed women at all levels and in key positions in peacekeeping and to integrate the gender perspective into all phases of analysis, planning, implementation and reporting.

We hope that the revised strategy to increase the participation of women in peace operations, to be presented by the Secretary-General for the Security Council's consideration pursuant to resolution 2436 (2018), will be able contribute to the full, meaningful and effective participation of women in all aspects of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and sustainable peace.

Mexico supports and encourages the full participation of women in all areas of public life. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is one of the guiding principles of the transformative multilateral foreign policy of the new Government of Mexico. In that regard, I am pleased to announce that, since the resumption of its participation in United Nations peace operations in 2015, Mexico has deployed a total of nine women from its armed forces to peace missions in Colombia, Western Sahara and Mali.

In addition, we have succeeded in meeting the target of 15 per cent of women participating in peacekeeping missions required of contributing countries in those operations by the United Nations. As we recently announced at the 29 March United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial on uniformed capabilities, performance and protection, Mexico will deploy a greater number of women in peace operations. They will be trained in accordance with United Nations standards in fulfilment of Mexico's commitment to ensuring the Organization's efforts to strengthen the meaningful participation of women in such operations. Similarly, earlier this month, the first course on gender and the women and peace and security agenda for female personnel began as part of the predeployment training that the Joint Training Centre for Peacekeeping Operations of Mexico has been providing since 2018.

In conclusion, we must continue to question how we perceive the use of force, conflicts, weapons and their relation to the social constructs of masculinity and femininity. Only in that way will we be able to continue advancing the women and peace and security agenda and achieve gender equality.

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

Mr. Arbeiter (Canada): I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security — an informal network of 57 interested Member States, chaired by Canada, representing all five regional groups at the United Nations.

Including women in United Nations peace operations is both the right and the smart thing to do. Resolution 1325 (2000) recognizes the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The Security Council has been resolute in affirming the indispensable role of women in peacekeeping and continues to highlight the imperative of increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peace operations, including in resolutions 2242 (2015), 2378 (2017), 2382 (2017) and 2436 (2018).

Troop and police contributors have echoed those calls, including through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative of the Secretary-General. Overall, increasing the participation of women in peace operations contributes to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustaining Development, including

Sustainable Development Goal 5, on gender equality, and Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions.

Evidence and experience demonstrate that women's participation leads to outcomes that make peace operations more effective. Women bring valuable perspectives, improve situational awareness, increase the protection-reach of missions, enhance the access of populations to critical services and help build trust with local communities. That enhances the safety and security of peacekeepers and the communities they serve, as well as the operational effectiveness of missions.

Despite facing persistent barriers, women have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to perform the same tasks, to the same standards and under the same difficult conditions, as their male counterparts. The Group of Friends applauds the efforts undertaken by the Secretariat, in particular the uniformed gender parity strategy of the Department of Peace Operations, to increase the number of uniformed women personnel. We are committed to helping achieve its targets.

However, we stress that this is not a numbers game. Women must be able to participate fully and meaningfully in peace operations at all levels and in all positions — whether serving in civilian, police or military roles and whether in leadership or as part of integrated mission teams.

In addition, efforts to reduce barriers to women's participation and develop institutional standards to promote their safety, such as training on sexual harassment and on abuse prevention and response, are critical. We also welcome recent progress in achieving the gender targets under the strategy, including increasing the deployment of mixed-gender police and military units and the appointment of women to command positions in missions.

Yet despite that progress we are still failing to ensure the full inclusion of women in peace operations. Less than 5 per cent of military contingents and less than 8 per cent of formed police units are women, and only 22 per cent of civilians in peace operations are women. The situation is even more dire when examining the participation of uniformed women in the higher ranks of peace operations. We must do better.

While a number of efforts have been undertaken by the United Nations, it is ultimately up to the troop- and police-contributing countries to recruit, train, support,

equip and deploy women peacekeepers. All troop- and police-contributing countries should comprehensively review their criteria and procedures for deployment to United Nations peace operations, including by addressing persistent barriers facing women, such as those related to recruitment, training and promotion initiatives, restrictions on occupations, access to deployment opportunities, institutional challenges related to the structure of respective security services and additional attitudinal constraints.

We simply cannot achieve success in United Nations peace operations without getting our own houses in order. To that end, national action plans and strategies on women and peace and security can serve as important tools to catalyse commitments on women in peace operations. We encourage the adoption and revision of such plans to enhance women's recruitment, retention and deployment in security services supporting peace operations.

Finally, the Group notes that increasing the number of women in peace operations must be accompanied by a relentless effort to meet United Nations commitments to mainstream gender considerations in such operations. Success depends upon peace operations being equipped with appropriate gender analysis and expertise at all levels and all stages of a mission. The role of gender advisers and women protection advisers in achieving that cannot be understated, and we emphasize the importance of ensuring that they have the access to the resources and training needed to fulfil their critical tasks. Collectively, we can make peace operations more effective and reflective of the communities they serve.

(spoke in French)

On behalf of my country, allow me to make a few additional remarks about women's participation in peace operations. I underscore the excellent briefings by the Secretary-General, Major General Lund and Ms. Merekaje. As we heard today, the meaningful participation of women in peace operations is not merely desirable but is, in all honesty, imperative. That assessment is neither new nor the subject of dispute. It has been reiterated by many Member States, the Secretary-General, the Under-Secretaries-General, civil-society representatives and the Force Commanders on the ground. It is a point of consensus, which Canada welcomes. That consensus must, however, be translated into operational change. The numbers are nowhere near where they should be. Something is not working. Most

members of the Council and the General Assembly agree that progress on the participation of women in peace operations has been scant, slow and insufficient.

Canada's Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations seeks to change that. Its concept and design are informed by the views of women who have personally participated in peace operations. Together with our partners, we started by listening to women peacekeepers about their experiences before, during and after deployment. We heard directly from them about the significant structural barriers they continue to face, including a lack of opportunity for training; a lack of mentors and support networks; inadequate accommodations, facilities and equipment in the field; a lack of information about deployment opportunities and a lack of leadership. We also heard about their experiences of unwanted touching, sexual advances and offensive remarks and the impact of such experiences on themselves and their missions. They questioned whether to report such incidents, and if so, to what end. The fact that such a situation persists is disheartening, but we can and must address it.

(spoke in English)

What we heard was anecdotal, but accurate. We need to continue listening. For that reason, Canada and Norway are funding the development of a barrier assessment methodology to gather the kind of empirical evidence that can help to sharpen our understanding of the systemic barriers confronting women peacekeepers. The Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are also working alongside our bilateral partners in the Elsie Initiative, the Ghana Armed Forces and the Zambia Police Service to use those barrier assessments to find ways to address the structural barriers that exist in our own systems. Our intention is to share what we learn with everyone and to encourage others to undertake similar efforts. We were very pleased to hear this morning from several members addressing the Council that they are also understanding the barriers in their systems. We realize that that may not be an easy thing to do and that some Member States may need some support.

In that context, we congratulate UN-Women for launching the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations on the eve of the Peacekeeping Ministerial. The Elsie Fund offers an innovative approach by financially incentivizing the increased deployment of trained and qualified women,

including by providing premiums for the deployment of gender-strong units. Canada has already provided \$15 million to the Fund, and we welcome the additional contributions recently announced by the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Finland and, earlier today, by Germany. We encourage all Member States to consider applying for funding to support their own domestic efforts or, alternatively, to consider providing contributions to the Fund.

I would also like to commend Germany's leadership in establishing a network for women peacekeepers. We have heard from many Canadian and other women peacekeepers about the value of such a network. We heard the same from briefers this morning, and look forward to working with Germany and other stakeholders on networking in relation to the Elsie Initiative. The importance of networking was also raised repeatedly at the Peacekeeping Ministerial preparatory meeting on women and peace and security, which Ethiopia and Canada co-hosted in Addis Ababa in January. With women and men from over 60 countries participating, the gathering exemplified the diversity that can improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions.

I was there and I learned a tremendous amount from the women peacekeepers, civil society leaders, academics and diplomats who shared their own personal experiences while on mission. Their message was clear — women are agents of change and partners for missions, they are mobilizers and they have deep connections to local communities. They also said, quite clearly, that leaders should be held accountable for being inclusive. Inclusion is easier said than done. It is a choice in how we act. That choice extends to how United Nations operations are designed, resourced, staffed and evaluated.

The Security Council has a choice as well. It can demonstrate that it is listening in how it formulates mission mandates, from inception to drawdown and beyond. Canada is strongly committed to working with the United Nations on practical ways to overcome the barriers facing women peacekeepers. We are convinced that we can achieve those goals by continuing to listen and continuing to act.

If elected for the 2021-2022 term on the Security Council, Canada will bring that approach and commitment to its work. We need to encourage and push each other and the United Nations. It will be challenging, but everyone benefits from more inclusive

United Nations peace operations. It is only when we work together that we can make that a reality.

The President: Speaking of the candidacy of Canada for a term on the Security Council, we try to limit our statements in the Council to five minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Ms. Skåre (Norway): I will keep my statement to less than five minutes.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his focus on gender equality and gender parity. Strong leadership is fundamental to combating ingrained prejudice and other obstacles to the full participation of women in peace operations and peace processes. We need to identify the barriers that exist in our home countries and within the United Nations system, and we need to identify whether they are having an adverse impact on women's participation in peacekeeping. We would like to comment on five issues raised in the presidency's concept note (S/2019/293, annex).

First, Security Council mandates should be explicit about the need to deploy more women and ensure that women are represented in all categories of personnel and about the importance of mainstreaming gender issues throughout the work of missions. Mandates should also be explicit about the importance of ensuring the full participation of women in political processes in host communities. That is vital to the successful resolution of conflicts and enabling a successful transition from a peacekeeping presence to other forms of support.

Secondly, as troop- and police-contributing countries, we all have a responsibility to deploy more women and address barriers to women's deployment, including through national action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

Thirdly, training is key, both for increasing women's participation and for enhancing all peacekeepers' understanding of the gender perspective.

Fourthly, Member States should actively promote women to leadership positions. That is important both to tap into the valuable resources that women represent and to provide role models who can encourage more women to participate. We are speaking from experience. The

Nordic countries are proud to provide women leaders to United Nations peacekeeping operations. One example is Major General Kristin Lund — the first woman to be appointed Force Commander of a United Nations mission and the first woman to head the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in the Middle East.

Fifthly, there is often strength in numbers. The establishment of different forms of women's networks is a highly effective way of ensuring active outreach and enabling women peacekeepers to exchange experiences. The Women Military Network, which was initiated by Norway and Sweden in New York last year, is one example. I would encourage all women from fellow Member States who have a military background or who work in peacekeeping to join that network.

In conclusion, the Nordic countries stand committed to continuing to work to increase the number of women serving in United Nations peacekeeping operations at all levels and in all categories of personnel.

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

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to start by thanking Germany for convening today's meeting and taking up this very important topic.

The full and meaningful participation of women in all stages of the peace process has become today an essential part of sustaining peace, including successful peace operations. The Security Council has recognized its importance repeatedly, in resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions. Japan has pursued that goal under the leadership of Prime Minister Abe.

The participants in the fifth World Assembly for Women, hosted by Japan last month, reaffirmed the significance of the greater participation of women in peacekeeping missions and host countries, the military, police and justice sectors. The recruitment of talented and motivated women is key to improving the performance of any organization, including United Nations peace operations.

Japan welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Secretariat, including the new Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, to increase uniformed women personnel. Member States can boost such efforts in two ways. First, troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and police-contributing countries (PCCs) can ensure the full and meaningful participation of women in their national military and police, which would greatly help

increase the number of uniformed women in United Nations peace operations. After all, how can TCCs and PCCs help United Nations field missions meet the uniformed gender parity strategy targets if they do not meet those targets at home?

Here, I would like to share some of Japan's experiences. One recent notable achievement has been the lifting of all restrictions on women's postings in the Self-Defence Forces, except in two units where maternal protection is required, based on relevant laws. We have decided to allow women's participation in infantry, reconnaissance, engineering, all types of aviation and even submarine units. That enables talented and motivated female personnel to pursue careers according to their interests. That significant policy change was driven by political leadership. In 2013, at the General Assembly, Prime Minister Abe called for a society where women shine (see A/68/PV.12). Since then, he has urged the Self-Defence Forces to reform themselves and ensure meaningful participation for women.

A holistic approach is also important, given that increasing women's presence requires time and resources to implement multiple solutions, from changing mindsets to building facilities for accommodation. In April 2017, the Ministry of Defence launched an initiative that aims to address all remaining obstacles hindering women's participation.

The second step Member States can take to help implement the strategy is to utilize pre-deployment training targeting female uniformed personnel to help facilitate their deployment. For instance, the women's outreach courses of the United Nations Signals Academy have trained 155 female uniformed personnel and 19 have already been deployed to missions or are to be deployed soon. Japan has provided financial support to those courses, as well as to the female military officers' course held by UN-Women.

In conclusion, let me mention our ongoing efforts on the women and peace and security agenda. Japan revised its national action plan on women, peace and security in March. In Tokyo in December 2018, Japan co-hosted, with the Department of Peace Operations, the first-ever capacity-building training course for women's protection advisers to address conflict-related sexual violence. The training will make field missions more responsive to the specific needs of local women and girls and more accessible to women in the community.

We will continue to implement the women and peace and security agenda and facilitate women's participation at all levels of United Nations peace operations, including by appointing talented female officers to peacekeeping missions and dispatching female trainers to capacity-building programmes.

Ms. Zappia (Italy): I wish to thank you, Mr. President and, of course, Germany for having dedicated today's open debate to such an important topic.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, not only for his opening remarks but also, and above all, for being such a formidable advocate and actor for gender parity at the United Nations. I would also like to thank the briefers, Major General Lund and Ms. Merekaje, for their remarks.

Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Italy, the top troop contributor in the Western European and others Group and one of the most generous contributors to the peacekeeping budget, is deeply committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations peacekeeping. Experience has proved that women — be they peacekeepers, civilian staff, gender advisers or gender experts — play a fundamental role in enhancing the delivery of mandates and in improving the protection of civilians, as well as the safety and security of peacekeepers and humanitarian actors. Therefore, we should redouble our efforts to make United Nations peacekeeping missions fit for women and increase their presence.

Similarly, as Minister Von der Leyen mentioned in her remarks, it is absolutely crucial to ensure that all efforts to strengthen the presence of women in armed forces and peacekeeping missions be given the maximum visibility. A strong public communications campaign on the contribution of women to peacekeeping must be a fundamental element of our strategy.

Italy fully supports the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the incentives and measures planned under the uniformed gender parity strategy, launched by the Secretariat. During its most recent tenure on the Security Council, Italy initiated resolution 2382 (2017), which reaffirms the indispensable role of women in peacekeeping.

At the national level, in recent years, Italy has put in place a number of actions to integrate the gender perspective at all levels and in all branches of its military

organization. The Ministry of Defence has a Gender Adviser, a Joint Council on Gender Perspectives and an Equal Opportunities and Gender Perspective Unit. Training curricula for the armed forces, Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza include the gender perspective and its objectives.

As announced at the recent Peacekeeping Ministerial, Italy is offering to all interested troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries, for the current year, a new set of courses for gender advisers, the female engagement team and on the gender perspective. More can be done. The launch of the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, as well as the establishment of the Elsie Initiative Fund, to overcome barriers to increasing women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping operations is an important step in the right direction and we praise Canada's leadership in that regard.

The Security Council has a role to play by calling on the Secretariat, heads of missions, as well as troop- and police-contributing countries to ensure that the gender perspective is always duly taken into account, addressing persistent barriers and challenges to the deployment of women.

As Major General Lund said earlier today, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Force Commanders should make every effort to promote the active and meaningful involvement of women in situation analysis and planning, as well as in activities in the field, in particular those aimed at building trust with the local population and strengthening partnerships with local women's organizations. Indeed, women deployed in United Nations missions should be, first and foremost, interlocutors with the local female population. Our experience on the ground, especially in southern Lebanon and Afghanistan, show that whenever there is interaction between female soldiers and the local female population, such interaction is fruitful and successful. In a recent case, one of our most brilliant female soldiers of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), building on her experience as Chief of the Sector West Commander's close protection team, decided to go back to Lebanon, after her term in UNIFIL, to train the Lebanese female soldiers for the Presidential Guard Brigade, in the framework of our bilateral assistance to the country.

The creation of uniformed women's networks, to be implemented by June 2020, must also be seen

as a mechanism by which to foster dialogue with female organizations present in the host country. It would benefit the female component of peacekeeping operations and, at the same time, empower the women of the host country. That comprehensive approach to women and peacekeeping must also serve to further advance the fight against the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse. Italy fully supports the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and, during the United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial, announced a new contribution of €160,000 to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Finally, if the result of having this kind debate can bring to the table, as I see, a majority of Council members with women representatives, it is already a very good result.

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

Ms. Gambhir (India): We thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on this important issue. We also thank the Secretary-General and the other briefers for their useful remarks.

The normative and operative frameworks relating to the women and peace and security agenda have considerably strengthened across the United Nations system over the past two decades. Today, there is greater awareness about the centrality of the meaningful participation of women in United Nations peace and security efforts, including peacekeeping.

In the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations under the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, Member States agreed to collectively commit to implement the women and peace and security agenda and its priorities by ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of the peace process and by systematically integrating a gender perspective into all stages of analysis, planning, implementation and reporting. They further recommitted to increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels and in key positions.

In that context, India welcomes the recently launched uniformed gender parity strategy and sees it as a collective commitment towards implementing Action for Peacekeeping.

India is committed to increasing the number of women peacekeepers and to meeting targets in that regard within the specified timelines. The landmark first-ever deployment by the United Nations of an all-female formed police unit in Liberia by India became a role model for the local women to participate in policing and in the relevant rule-of-law frameworks.

India is fully prepared to deploy a female engagement team, comprising 22 women officers and soldiers, as part of a rapidly deployable battalion in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by August. We will also deploy a women formed police unit in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan by the end of this year.

We fully welcome the initiatives by the United Nations Secretariat in driving the formulation of policy frameworks to increase the number of women peacekeepers. However, we perceive that there is some hesitation to put strong commitments into the policy framework. In order to achieve the increased targets under the uniformed gender parity strategy, we should encourage countries that are willing to contribute full women units. However, we note that to accommodate those who cannot fulfil the all-women unit commitments, the policy frameworks are being diluted in favour of mixed units over all-women units. If that is the approach, how can we possibly achieve the target that we set for increasing women participation in peacekeeping.

Instead of supporting a policy of mixed units, we believe that all-women units perhaps need to be incentivized to encourage greater participation. Priority should also be given to deploying from the pending pledges related to women peacekeepers.

For its part, India stands ready to make every effort to fulfil those goals and strengthen institutional capacities as well as international cooperation on this issue.

India partners with UN-Women towards capacity-building initiatives at the New Delhi-based Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping, which conducted the third United Nations female military officers course for 40 women military officers from 26 countries. India also provides adequate predeployment training on gender sensitization to its peacekeeping forces.

We will continue to engage with partners to work towards ensuring the meaningful participation of women and for building inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies.

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

Mrs. Theofili (Greece): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this highly relevant and timely debate. My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union and would like to contribute the following remarks.

Nearly 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the achievement of full and equitable participation of women in peacekeeping operations is still a work in progress. We believe that this situation is detrimental not only to the cause of gender parity but also to the efficiency of peacekeeping missions themselves. Peacekeeping is a highly complex form of military operation. It requires skills that often go beyond traditional military training and it demands a higher degree of human sensitivity, diplomatic skills, cultural diversity and professional composure. Against that background, women peacekeepers are not only equal but sometimes better equipped. Gender parity is a question of not just female underrepresentation in peacekeeping but rather a chronic underutilization of our greatest asset for achieving its objectives.

In that context, we welcome the commitment, clear vision and concrete action plan contained in the uniformed gender parity strategy 2018—2028. I am glad to report that the troop contribution of my own country, Greece, to the maritime component of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon includes a percentage of military personnel that is at least three times higher than United Nations average. We are well on track today to achieving the strategy's objectives for 2028.

Earlier we heard Major General Lund describing her experience in United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). I am proud that through our considerable budgetary contribution to UNFICYP, we support the peacekeeping mission with the highest record in achieving gender parity at all levels, including the upper echelons of command.

However, for gender parity to be fully achieved, further action is needed to promote gender positive

training. For our part, we are happy to share our experiences through the United Nations military observers course offered by the Multinational Peace Support Operations Training Centre in Greece. In addition to that, training can take place in the form of mentoring programmes in the field, which have an even greater potential for disseminating gender positive narratives to the local armed forces and deployed personnel of troop-contributing countries alike.

Finally, creating an operational environment for women in uniform that is free from gender bias and abuse should be a top consideration when prioritizing the allocation of relevant human and budgetary resources.

To conclude, the Security Council can contribute to lifting the afore-mentioned internal barriers by consistently and horizontally following up on the subject when discussing relevant mandates. By doing so, it may even mitigate the effects of broader external barriers, such as the unfavourable distribution of family responsibilities and professional opportunities with which women in uniform have to contend.

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

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I am pleased to join representatives of States with an outstanding peacekeeping record in expressing our sincere gratitude to you, Mr. President, for organizing today's important debate and for Germany's dedication and support of United Nations peacekeeping. As I am about to deliver a statement in my national capacity, I would also like to highlight that Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

As we are approaching the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations next year, we should be honest with ourselves and our peoples: we all know very well the list of missed opportunities and the scope of unimplemented potential of the Organization. That is a luxury the world cannot really afford, as year after year it continues to face a growing number of challenges to international peace and security, including those that gave rise to the very emergence of the Organization — inter-State conflicts and military aggression.

At the same time, it is also clear that the United Nations can be and on many occasions has been efficient in terms of safeguarding international peace and security. It has at its disposal peacekeeping operations — a reliable and commonly used instrument

for curbing and preventing conflicts and ensuring sustaining peace. Therefore, we strongly support comprehensive and decisive actions aimed at the improvement of the United Nations peacekeeping pillar's efficiency, thereby giving our Organization appropriate abilities to address contemporary challenges in the peace and security domain.

It is true also that in order to secure peace and stability, our Organization must be proactive and preventive in its actions. We welcome and fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General to implement robust United Nations reform aimed at strengthening its peace and security architecture. My delegation fully supported the Action for Peace initiative at the high-level event organized by the Secretary-General on that initiative in September 2018.

We believe that gender parity must remain an integral part of such action. In this regard, we would like to express our gratitude for and satisfaction with the information provided by the Secretary-General on practical steps taken to implement the gender parity strategy for uniformed personnel in peace operations.

My country has always been a strong and reliable partner of the Organization in peacekeeping activities. Ukrainian peacekeepers, women and men alike, were part of a number of United Nations peacekeeping success stories. Among the most recent was the United Nations Mission in Liberia, in which the Ukrainian contingent, equipped with attack and military-transport helicopters, took active part from the beginning. I should underline that Ukraine is also incorporating gender parity positive changes in developing legislation, planning and budgeting, as well as in integrating the subject of women, peace and security in the ongoing security and defence sector reform.

The numbers speak for themselves. Over the course of past five years the number of female servicemen reached the mark of 10.6 per cent, which is about 25,000. As of today, there are about 70 women in the rank of colonel serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces. With the entry into force last October of the Law on Gender Equality Between Men and Women During Military Service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and Other Military Formations, women now have the opportunity to enter into contract for military service and to enjoy equal access to military ranks, positions and equal responsibility during their service.

Moreover, the revised national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) includes important provisions aimed at increasing women's participation in peacebuilding processes and peacekeeping operations, conducting a gender assessment and providing gender-responsive services to people affected by conflict, ensuring human rights and the protection of women's rights. I am confident that as a result of such reforms, we will see more women from Ukraine in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Nowadays, Ukrainian women contribute greatly to peace operations in different hotspots, but they do even more to protect their own land from foreign aggression, including by serving in the Joint Forces Operation in the Ukrainian Donbas. It is very symbolic that Ukraine, exactly like Ukrainian peacekeepers, has done its best to uphold international peace and security by participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Now, we expect the United Nations and its peacekeeping operations to do the same by putting an end to the suffering of Ukraine's people in the conflict unleashed against my country.

I should like to recall the statement delivered by my President at the aforementioned Action for Peacekeeping high-level event that a multinational peacekeeping force under Security Council mandate, if deployed, could become a decisive factor in bringing peace to Ukraine. Today, we would like to see the United Nations peacekeeping potential be put to use in resolving the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Ukraine, for its part as a peace-loving nation, will continue to be an active participant in the United Nations peacekeeping endeavours, including by widening the geography of its presence in operations around the world.

The President: I now give the floor the representative of Spain.

Ms. Bassols Delgado (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to begin by thanking the German presidency for having organized this extremely timely open debate.

For Spain, the women and peace and security agenda is not a routine matter in the work of the Council. It is quite the opposite. Ensuring the full participation of women in peace operations is a collective, complex and multidimensional responsibility that concerns the entire international community.

Spain is one of the countries most firmly committed to the women and peace and security agenda. It was

under our presidency of the Council that resolution 2242 (2015), updating the historic resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted. We are pleased to see that the recommendations that we made to the Secretariat — such as the deployment of gender advisers in all the missions, better coordination between the Secretariat and UN-Women and the holding of regular consultations between those responsible for the various missions and women's civil society organizations — have been implemented.

Since then, Spain has continued to make progress with respect to the agenda. In 2016, we established, in collaboration with the United Kingdom, an informal group of experts of the Security Council to follow-up on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in every peacekeeping operation. We were the third country in the world to draft a national plan of action for the implementation of the agenda, and we are successfully implementing a zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse and exploitation, supplemented by a policy of specialized training in this area.

Spain has firmly incorporated the women and peace and security agenda into its foreign policy, and we continue to promote the participation of women in peace missions within the scope of the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and NATO. Women began to gain access to military careers in Spain in 1988, more than 30 years ago. Since then, the gender perspective has been gradually integrated into our armed forces until formal equality was reached in 1999 and full equal equality in 2007.

There are some experiences and good practices that I would like to share with the Council. The Spanish system envisages the access of women to combat positions, in total equality with men. Our system is fully egalitarian and advanced because it allows women to choose any position, level and destination, without quotas or ceilings of any kind. We also have a permanent body in the Ministry of Defence — the Gender Equality Observatory — that continuously monitors the situation within the Spanish armed forces.

We actively participate in various initiatives to promote gender issues and their mainstreaming in the area of peace missions. I would like to mention two examples. We are participating in the Spanish-Dutch initiative to provide courses to civil and military personnel for the training of gender advisers. We also participate in the European Union project in leadership,

discipline and military training in the area of gender. Within the framework of that project, Spain has assumed European leadership for training activities and discipline for military personnel deployed in missions outside of the European Union.

There is still much to do. Although the number of women in our armies and in the navy is higher than the European average, it is still low. It also remains below the percentage of women deployed in peacekeeping operations in which Spain participates. Although there are almost 15,000 women in our armed forces, they represent only 12.7 per cent of all troops. The percentage is slightly lower for our participation in missions abroad; only 8 per cent of the 2,835 soldiers that Spain deploys outside its borders today are women.

We are aware that the women and peace and security agenda is not a question of quotas or numbers. It is a question of presence, participation and level of responsibility. Those factors have as much, or more, importance as the figures. In any event, we are aware that we must continue working towards improving that aspect of our public policies.

Our commitment to the women and peace and security agenda ensures in law the full equality of access and treatment of women in the armed forces. Even so, obstacles persist. They are not of a political or legal dimension; many are within the social realm. The earliest inclusions of women in the armed forces and peacekeeping operations required a gradual transformation. That progressive adaptation must also occur now in order to continue suppressing sociological, educational or financial barriers. Only in that way will we be able to overcome inertia and allow the full participation of women in peacekeeping operations at all levels, including in decision-making. To that end, we must continue responding to some specific challenges, for example, taking the realities and particular needs of women into account, adapting rotation periods and respecting the personal, work and life balance.

To conclude, this is a medium- and long-term effort. When we updated resolution 1325 (2000) in 2015, we realized that we had a very rich body of knowledge, but we also saw that, in practice, we had made little progress. It has been four years since then. The necessary and timely reform of the peace and security pillar must put into practice the Secretary-General's vision of a more efficient peacekeeping action. We fully support its implementation and its approach. That

framework provides us with an exceptional opportunity to give renewed impetus to the full participation of women in peace missions. I reaffirm that this will continue to be the objective of my Government, both nationally and internationally.

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

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting and for Germany's strong commitment to the women and peace and security agenda. I also thank you for the leadership you have assumed during your membership of the Security Council as a non-permanent member. I would also like to thank the various briefers for their detailed and comprehensive statements.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representation of Canada, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

In May 2000, the first deliberations of the women and peace and security agenda took place in Namibia, giving birth to the Windhoek Declaration. At the time, Namibia realized that the international community needed to properly take into account the role of women as serious stakeholders in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, decision-making and mediation. The Windhoek Declaration formed the basis of the drafting of resolution 1325 (2000). In October 2000, Namibia was President of the Security Council and successfully oversaw the unanimous adoption of the historic resolution 1325 (2000) (see S/PV.4213). Our desire at the time was, in essence, to see more women in peacekeeping, decision-making and negotiating positions at both the national and international levels.

National action plans are the embodiment of resolution 1325 (2000). Those plans are vital. They are a tool for States to implement their commitments to the women and peace and security agenda and detail their actions and obligations under the Security Council women and peace and security resolutions. As of November 2018, 79 Member States had national action plans. While we recognize that many Member States are implementing resolution 1325 (2000) without national actions plans, we encourage them to set up national action plans, which would help ensure the structured implementation, follow-up and evaluation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Namibia's national action plan is forward-looking and incorporates emerging issues, trends and threats to peace and security, such as climate change, cybersecurity and trafficking in persons, while also looking at how those issues impact the overall women and peace and security agenda. The effective implementation of and accountability for national action plans requires a monitoring and evaluation plan and a robust coordination mechanism. The Namibian Government will ensure that a monitoring and evaluation plan and regular reporting are undertaken and documented to realize the objectives of the plan.

In the aftermath of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we saw a shift towards a growing awareness and a move towards mainstreaming the involvement of women in areas related to peace and security. The 2018 report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2018/900) noted the increase in the number of women deployed as contingent commanders, as well as the fact that several missions have female police and military peacekeeper networks and military and police gender advisers. Despite that, the representation of women among military troops and police officers remains unacceptably low, at 4 and 10 per cent, respectively. The report also issues a stark warning that those numbers are at risk of further decreasing in the coming years through the imminent downsizing of several peacekeeping missions.

Namibia is playing its part in ensuring that women play a greater role in peacekeeping operations. Namibian police officers, correctional officers and military officers are currently deployed in three peacekeeping missions — in Darfur, South Sudan and Abyei — with a number of qualified female officers included. In December 2018, we achieved the Department of Peace Operations' target of 15 per cent of women participating in peacekeeping missions. We encourage all troop- and police-contributing Member States to strive to achieve that minimum target.

Namibia is currently hosting the third meeting of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Point Network, which concluded just an hour ago. A communiqué on that meeting will be circulated to all missions at the conclusion of the meeting in the next day or so.

I am happy to announce that Namibia intends to establish a women's peace centre, which will focus on national, regional and international conflict resolution and management activities, as well as aspects of

mediation and negotiations. The centre will further focus on capacity-building by providing workshops and predeployment training for peacekeepers, while contributing to the maintenance of peace in general. In that regard, we call upon the international community and our development partners to support the establishment of the centre.

To conclude, I would like to remind members that the international community will celebrate a number of landmarks next year, including the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). In the lead up to those anniversaries, I encourage Member States to take stock of the limited progress that has been achieved and look to the future. Those anniversaries should be an opportunity for all of us to redouble our efforts to ensure that women are adequately represented in peacekeeping, decision-making and negotiation positions at both the national and international levels, as was our desire in 2000 when resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted.

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

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the increased participation of women in peacekeeping operations. We really appreciate your leadership in promoting the women and peace and security agenda and also want to recognize the substantial contribution of Germany to United Nations peacekeeping in terms of providing personnel, training and funding. We were very pleased to hear the announcement of the global female peacekeepers network, which was made at the beginning of this meeting.

As has been reported, since 2015 the overall proportion of United Nations peace operations personnel who are women has increased only modestly, from 4.2 per cent to 5 per cent. At the current pace of change, it would take decades to reach the levels outlined in resolution 2242 (2015). We certainly believe that there is a great deal more we must do collectively in order to maximize our efforts and achieve further progress. We also encourage the Security Council to prioritize its efforts in this regard, consistent with the need to bring women's participation and leadership to the core of peace and security, in line with its mandate.

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like to make a few additional observations.

First, we strongly support the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to establish and maintain international peace and security, and call for the full implementation of all the relevant Security Council resolutions that address this issue. I would furthermore like to reaffirm our support for the Secretary-General's reforms aimed at rendering United Nations peace operations a more effective tool in the promotion of peace and security and at enhancing support to political processes in host countries. We highly commend his leadership in this domain, including the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which has garnered a strong sense of ownership among Member States, as well as the recently adopted United Nations uniformed gender-parity Strategy for the period 2018-2028, which represents an important development in meeting the goals set at the London 2016 Peacekeeping Ministerial.

Slovakia has been an active troop- and police-contributing country since its admission to the United Nations, 26 years ago, having served in 19 missions to date. Currently, our peacekeepers are deployed in Cyprus, the Golan Heights and Haiti. Slovakia has also participated in military and civilian missions of the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), where we also attach great importance to the women and peace and security agenda; indeed, as the current Chair of the OSCE, we are undertaking a number of initiatives and practical steps in the same context.

Increasing the number of women in our armed forces has been a long-term policy of Slovakia. Currently, servicewomen make up nearly 12 per cent of our armed forces. That increasing trend is set to continue in future. The current gender equality action plan of the Slovak Ministry of Defence aims to integrate the gender perspective into areas including operational planning, education, training and evaluation.

I would like to highlight the case of Cyprus, where we make our largest contribution to United Nations peacekeeping missions. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) has already been mentioned by several speakers today, including by the Ambassador of Greece, recently cited as an excellent example of a mission where all senior leadership is provided by women. As such, it

is a truly important example that should be followed. In Cyprus, we have exceeded the targets set in the uniformed gender-parity strategy, whereby almost 10 per cent of our military contingents and 80 per cent of police personnel are uniformed female peacekeepers. Overall, more than 44 per cent — 22 out of 50 — of all UNFICYP contingents' uniformed female personnel is from Slovakia.

Resolution 2151 (2014), on security sector reform, underscores the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of the security sector-reform process. Gender-sensitive security sector reform is therefore key to developing security-sector institutions that are non-discriminatory, representative of the population and capable of responding effectively to the specific security needs of diverse groups.

I would like to highlight that recently, on 13 March, the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, co-chaired by Slovakia and our close partner South Africa, together with the Group of Friends of Gender Parity, co-chaired by Ghana and Qatar, jointly organized a high-level round table on gender parity and security sector reform. That was our practical contribution to this ongoing debate, and an important example of how two Groups of Friends can be brought together and take a broader, more comprehensive look at issues, going beyond silos. That meeting highlighted that security sector reform must be gender-sensitive throughout its planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. Reforming the security sector must focus on recruitment processes and improving the delivery of security services to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence. The discussions also underscored that women must be promoted as equal and strategic leaders, barriers must be broken down and stereotypes eliminated about women's role in societies, including their participation in peace processes.

In conclusion, United Nations peace operations, which are the most visible face of United Nations engagement in the world, must be representative of, and responsive to, the needs of men and women alike. The complementary skills of male and female personnel have long been recognized as essential for the effectiveness of United Nations missions. We must therefore strengthen our cooperation to accelerate progress towards achieving United Nations targets to increase the meaningful participation of women

serving in uniformed military and police roles in United Nations peace operations.

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

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate Germany for having convened today's open debate.

Uruguay endorses the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

I will focus my statement on Uruguay's experience as a troop-contributing country and on our actions to increase the participation of women in peace operations.

Fully cognizant of the valuable contributions that women make to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, my country has deployed military observers to oversee ceasefires, disarmament and access to humanitarian aid. Moreover, in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, women contingents have participated in operations to negotiate the establishment of relations with armed groups and conducted tasks to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence and human rights violations. In these challenging contexts, many women are deployed as military staff officers, doctors, dentists, nurses, translators, drivers, radio operators and soldiers, among many other roles. Indeed, they excel in performing the most difficult jobs on an equal footing with men. Moreover, our experience confirms the unique capacity of female uniformed personnel to interact with local communities, thereby illustrating their particular sensitivity and ability to build trust, particularly when dealing with situations involving women and children.

Conscious that there is still a long way to go, Uruguay will continue working to foster greater participation by women in peacekeeping forces. Major efforts are under way aimed at supporting and developing joint strategies and initiatives with the United Nations and with other Member States, while others focus on the domestic context. At the international level, Uruguay supports the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, along with the efforts of the Department of Peace Operations through its uniformed gender-parity strategy initiative, launched in January. Together with a group of countries, Uruguay co-facilitated the consultation process on the Action for Peacekeeping

initiative in 2018. Uruguay also joined the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

With regard to our joint initiatives developed with other countries, Uruguay organized a preparatory meeting for the United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial with the United Kingdom in Montevideo in December. During the preparatory meeting, particular emphasis was placed on training Blue Helmets in topics related to women and peace and security and on specific training for female peacekeepers. Moreover, Uruguay joined the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, launched by Canada. We will also be honoured to join Canada in co-chairing the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network in 2020, which coincides with the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), and in coordinating actions linked to peacekeeping operations.

Allow me to touch upon some of the initiatives that my country has carried out domestically, which have allowed us to progressively improve the participation of women in our contingents in terms of quantity and quality. I can confirm that Uruguay is one of the troop-contributing countries with the highest percentage of female personnel deployed in peace missions. That expansion has gone hand in hand with the increasing presence of women in the Uruguayan armed forces and police, thanks to the Government's adoption of gender-equality State policies that have allowed women to participate in all activities, including those traditionally performed by men. Today, on the basis of merit, women freely join the armed forces and police-training schools.

Moreover, Uruguay is seeking to tackle the challenges faced by female personnel on the ground, such as performance in difficult operational environments, and in sociocultural situations in which the participation of women as negotiators is rejected or in which their rights are simply not taken into account. To facilitate the participation of female staff with young children, our country is analysing the possibility of relieving such women after three months of peace-mission deployment.

It should also be noted that challenges often develop into opportunities. It has become clear that we could enhance the empowerment of local women, who follow the example set by female personnel working in operations on par with and as efficiently as men.

Another initiative that deserves special attention is predeployment training. The National Peace Operations

Training Institute of Uruguay offers mandatory courses to all troops to be sent into the field. Women particularly benefit from that training, which allows them to tactfully cope in situations that necessitate their action, especially to prevent and respond to violence against women and children.

To conclude, I would like to express Uruguay's appreciation and gratitude to peacekeepers, especially the women who act with dedication and sacrifice far from their homes and children, inspired by a strong vocation to serve in the name of peace.

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

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I would like to thank the German presidency for convening today's open debate on a topic of the utmost importance.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. In addition, I would like to make the following few remarks.

Peacekeeping operations and uniformed personnel are the most visible representatives of the United Nations, directly working with communities every day. For that reason, it is imperative to increase the number of female peacekeepers and promote their full, effective and meaningful participation in United Nations peace operations. Estonia therefore strongly supports the recently adopted uniformed gender-parity strategy for the period 2018-2028 and related efforts of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and its follow-up resolutions, remarkable achievements have been made at the normative level. Women and peace and security issues are now interlinked with the United Nations peacekeeping agenda. However, challenges lie at the level of implementation, and we must continue promoting the role of women in peace and security at the national, regional and international levels.

On the national level, Estonia has significantly increased its level of ambition regarding female conscripts in the military service, having tripled the number of women that can be called to serve. That has had a direct and positive impact on Estonia's ability as a troop-contributing country to accelerate gender parity among United Nations peacekeeping troops by encouraging female military and police personnel to apply.

In addition to striving to increase the number of female peacekeepers, we consider it paramount to sensitize all peacekeepers on gender aspects in peace operations. Thorough predeployment training on human rights and gender-related issues, including on the prevention of, and response to, conflict-related sexual violence and the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse, is a must. Therefore, gender advisers should be an integral part of all United Nations missions, and their activities must be further reinforced in settings where conflict-related sexual violence is widespread.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank Canada for launching the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations to identify, address and remove the existing barriers to women's meaningful participation in United Nations peace operations in different troop-contributing countries and military and police organizations. That kind of practical evidence-based approach could be the way to help us to achieve the ambitious objectives that we have set on women's participation and impact on United Nations peacekeeping.

I thank you, Mr. President, for including women and peace and security as one of the main topics of your presidency. We all recognize the importance of involving women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding and in post-conflict reconstruction, and should act accordingly. For its part, Estonia would like to continue focusing on the issue of women and peace and security as a non-permanent member of the Security Council during 2020-2021 period.

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

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): Let me also begin by thanking Germany for convening today's open debate on women in peacekeeping — an integral tool for achieving some of the priorities under the women and peace and security agenda. I also wish to convey our appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres and the other briefers for their insightful briefings delivered earlier today.

Beginning with resolution 1325 (2000) there have so far been eight Security Council resolutions that have articulated and moved forward the woman and peace and security agenda. Even as the international community has come together to collectively condemn acts of unimaginable horror, sexual abuse of women

and girls has continued to be used as a tactic of war in conflicts across the world, including in my own region.

As one of the world's leading troop-contributing countries (TCCs), Pakistan has set the highest standards in fulfilling peacekeeping mandates, including the protection of vulnerable segments of the population, especially women and children, from violence. We have always advocated integrating the gender perspective into the peacebuilding paradigm, with a view to promoting comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable peace.

Female peacekeepers from my country have already made a mark and have shown themselves, alongside their male counterparts, to be competent, dedicated and professional. An outstanding example was Shahzadi Gulfam, the first-ever recipient of the United Nations International Female Police Peacekeeper Award in 2011. We are proud of her service, as indeed those of all our peacekeepers.

To share our experience and promote best practices in peacekeeping, we have established the Centre for International Peace and Stability in Islamabad, which offers specially designed modules to help peacekeepers respond effectively and protect innocent civilians from sexual violence. During the recently held United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial, we also offered a course for female military observers at the Centre for International Peace and Stability. During her visit to Pakistan earlier this year, the President of the General Assembly, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa, visited the Centre for International Peace and Stability to interact with and learn more about the experiences of female peacekeepers. That led to a rich discussion of ways to inspire more women to join peacekeeping missions.

As a major TCC, let me make five specific points.

First, we believe that the increased participation of female peacekeepers and encouraging more women to take up mediation roles helps in the stabilization and reconstruction phases of conflicts. Pakistan, for its part, will be deploying a female engagement team in the Democratic Republic of the Congo later this year. We also recently achieved the goal of ensuring that 15 per cent of staff officers deployed in peacekeeping missions are female, thereby fulfilling our responsibilities in accordance with the uniformed gender-parity strategy, the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and Security Council resolutions.

Secondly, incentivizing the participation of women in peacekeeping missions merits serious consideration. That might include additional allowances, shorter rotation cycles, better-suited medical facilities, better accommodation and improved communication with the families that they have left behind to serve the cause of peace.

Thirdly, increasing the deployment of female peacekeepers alone cannot realistically meet the requirements of the women and peace and security agenda. It is national Governments that bear the primary responsibility for women's safety and rights. The international community should support States in that regard, including by strengthening the capacity of their national institutions.

Fourthly, Pakistan fully supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Pakistan was among the first group of countries to sign the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on the subject, and the Prime Minister of Pakistan also joined the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership last year.

Fifthly, female peacekeepers must feel safe in their environments. Any slack in ensuring their safety would also affect the United Nations credibility and ability to deliver. A zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse must also be implemented in letter and spirit to accompany the progressive deployment of female peacekeepers, as envisaged by the United Nations.

Let me conclude by saying that, for my country, protecting the vulnerable, including women and children, is not only a global peace and security imperative but also our solemn obligation. We remain resolute and steadfast in honouring our commitments in that regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Van Den Akker: I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Experience clearly shows that the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in peace

operations is critical to helping a country transition from conflict to sustainable peace. The United Nations has taken important steps in that regard. The European Union in particular welcomes the recently adopted uniformed gender-parity strategy for the period 2018-2028, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support's policy on gender-responsive United Nations peacekeeping operations and the efforts taken in the context of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. A concrete example of those efforts is the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, which became the first United Nations peacekeeping operation to have a female Force Commander, and now has all its components headed by women, as well as a female Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Despite progress, almost 20 years since the adoption of the Security Council's landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security, we are still lagging behind. The 15 per cent goal for military observers and staff officers, set at the London 2016 Peacekeeping Ministerial, was not met in 2018. Fewer than 5 per cent of military contingents and less than 8 per cent of the members of formed police units are women, while among individual police officers the numbers are slightly better, at 20 per cent. As for Government-provided corrections and justice personnel, the proportion of women stands at 25 per cent. Only 28 per cent of civilians in peacekeeping operations are women.

We face very similar challenges at the EU level. Women compose around 30 per cent of all staff in EU civilian missions, and about 5 per cent of military missions and operations. The first female Head of Mission was appointed to an EU civilian mission in 2015, and five out of 10 civilian missions have women in place as Head or Deputy Head of Mission. Despite those improvements, the growth that we have witnessed has been too slow to achieve our ultimate goal: gender equality in peacekeeping and peace-resolution processes, which entails far more than increasing the number of female peacekeepers.

While the prime responsibility of addressing barriers and improving procedures for deployment lies with troop- and police-contributing countries, the European Union is fully committed to doing its part. When the EU and the United Nations agreed to reinforce the EU-United Nations long-standing partnership on peacekeeping and crisis management in

the margins of the General Assembly last September, we made women and peace and security the first, out of eight, joint priorities for our cooperation in the three upcoming years, 2019-2021, as well as a cross-cutting priority across all areas of cooperation.

To ensure progress in the first year of implementation, our missions and operations are already working together on the ground to enhance the integration of a gender perspective throughout their activities. We are mapping ongoing cooperation on the ground, on the basis of which we will identify strategic areas for further cooperation. Moreover, as mentioned during the United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial on 29 March, we have agreed to organize a joint United Nations-EU workshop in Brussels on enabling factors for engaging more women in all roles and areas of expertise and at all levels of peacekeeping and crisis management. The aim of that joint effort is to build on already ongoing work and existing data in this area and arrive at a set of practical recommendations that will be widely shared. We hope to encourage the practice of regular informed and practical exchanges on enabling factors for engaging more women in peacekeeping among EU member States, other United Nations troop- and police-contributing countries and experts in this area.

To make a real difference and if we are to fulfil the commitments that we collectively made in Action for Peacekeeping and the Declaration of Shared Commitments, progress on the participation of women in peace operations needs to go hand and hand with progress on all other aspects of the women and peace and security agenda. We would recall five key priorities in that context.

First, we should ensure adequate financing for peacekeeping operations to deliver on their women and peace and security and human rights mandates.

Secondly, a minimum number of gender units and gender advisers should be set for all United Nations missions, and their deployment should be reinforced in settings where women's rights are particularly at stake and conflict-related sexual violence is widespread.

Thirdly, gender-sensitive training should be encouraged for all United Nations peacekeeping missions' components to create a non-hostile environment for women, mitigating, therefore, the occurrence of gender-based violence incidents and acts

of hatred against women across contingents, as well as sexual exploitation and abuse incidents.

Fourthly, all Member States should be encouraged to adopt national action plans, including adequate budgeting and detailed operative actions, to ensure women's full participation in the security sector.

Fifthly, the collection of data related to the composition of all mission components should be ensured, along with a consistent procedures to strictly monitor the deployment of women and their effective participation in all the peacekeeping processes and at all levels.

The instruments, strategies and political commitments are there; now is the time for their implementation. We sincerely thank Germany and France for placing the women and peace and security agenda at the centre of their presidencies, and we once again reiterate the EU's full commitment to engage in those common efforts.

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

Mr. Duarte Lopes (Portugal): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate.

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Portugal is strongly committed to gender equality, human rights and international peace and security. As stated in resolution 1325 (2000), a lack of gender equality adversely affects the maintenance of international peace and security.

Portugal recently adopted its third national plan for implementing resolution 1325 (2000), with clear targets, timetables and indicators. The new action plan fosters the participation of civil society and includes measures on: first, integrating the women and peace and security agenda and a gender-equality perspective at the national, regional and international levels; secondly, protecting the rights of women and girls and punishing all forms of violence, including sexual violence; and, thirdly, promoting the participation of women and young girls in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes.

As became clear at the recent United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial on 29 March, there is broad recognition of the important role that women play in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Despite the progress

achieved, almost two decades since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we are far from achieving the full, effective and meaningful participation of female peacekeepers and a sufficient level of integration of a gender perspective in such operations.

We therefore fully support the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and endorse the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations peacekeeping operations. We also welcome the new uniformed gender-parity strategy, launched by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), with clear goals to advance female participation. Its timely implementation requires very strong synergy between the United Nations and Member States.

As stated during the Peacekeeping Ministerial, Portugal has shown an interest in working with DPO on the possibility of organizing mixed training courses on capacity and leadership, with 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female participation. We hope that that will enable meaningful progress in key areas where women have traditionally been underrepresented.

With regard to our presence in United Nations peace operations, I would like to highlight the fact that Portugal is now, for the first time, deploying female soldiers to combat missions. In that context, we would like to reiterate our willingness expressed during the Peacekeeping Ministerial to share lessons learned with interested partners.

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

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): As a representative of a country of seasoned peacekeepers, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on what we see as the critical issue of women in peacekeeping.

We are speaking today over lunchtime because it is important that the Action for Peacekeeping pledges and the Secretary-General's reform agenda on United Nations peace operations be acted upon. The targets for increasing the number of women in peacekeeping at every level are significant. That means ensuring that we apply a gender perspective and empower serving women, in order to improve the actual effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping across the globe.

Despite some progress, we in Ireland remain concerned about the rate at which we are succeeding. The uniformed gender-parity strategy, gender

mainstreaming and the introduction of technical expertise are of course all very welcome, but the fact remains that we are still falling short. We need to understand why, and we need to do something about that.

With over 60 years of United Nations peacekeeping experience, the longest unbroken record of any Member State, Ireland well knows the importance and urgency of ensuring increased female participation. The presence of women peacekeepers challenges traditional gender norms: it challenges them for the better. It also means that local women find it easier to engage with peacekeepers, not least in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. Nonetheless, we recognize that our women peacekeepers are trained for the most dangerous of situations, and it should not even be questioned that they are capable of performing the same tasks as their male colleagues. Every role in the Irish Defence Forces is open to both men and women.

Ireland's Defence Forces has initiated its own gender, diversity and inclusion office and developed its own action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). We firmly believe that making positive, practical and quantitative changes to increase the number of women peacekeepers is essential. However, we are also conscious that that is not a panacea to the inequality that persists in peacekeeping. Put simply, one cannot just add women and stir. We very much recognize the need for broader cultural and structural shifts in security organizations and institutions across the board.

To put it in concrete terms, our own Defence Forces are actively implementing gender adviser roles across their headquarters. We have gender focal points to back that up, including in all overseas deployments. We have also implemented family-friendly policies, such as shortened or shared overseas deployments and the semesterization of professional military courses. Those are designed to benefit both men and women, of course, but also to address the obstacles that can inhibit women's active and meaningful participation.

However, we are not stopping there. Going beyond what we are doing ourselves, we are also working with our partner peacekeeping Member States. We are asking them to nominate women for the training that we provide. In our next pledged training, over one third of those participating will be women. We see that as progress, but the job is not yet done.

We recognize the United Nations own efforts in mainstreaming gender, including through fully resourced senior gender advisers in its own United Nations operations across the globe. The Department of Peace Operations gender-parity strategy holds mission leadership to account for meeting gender-related goals. That is how it should be. We want to see that the full value of women peacekeepers' skills and training is realized, and that our valuable women peacekeepers are not sidelined, or that their work is confined to so-called women's issues. Acting on those commitments should bring about the structural and institutional transformation that we all want to see. All of those kinds of issues are the type on which we would shine a light should Ireland be lucky enough to be given a non-permanent place at this table in the Security Council 2020 elections.

In conclusion, our own President, Michael D. Higgins, has called on all of us to act "as conscious agitators", who must work to "place the dignity and participation of women and girls' rights at the heart of our actions globally". Quite frankly, we need to do better. We need to do better to ensure women's participation in peacekeeping, not only because it makes peacekeeping better but, put simply, because it is our right.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the African Union.

Ms. Mohammed: The African Union (AU) believes that the women and peace and security agenda remains a strong framework that guides our global efforts to build more peaceful and sustainable societies. Clearly, resolution 1325 (2000) has set a firm foundation for women to take an equal role at all stages of conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. That obviously includes women's representation in peacekeeping operations as well as during peace talks.

However, 19 years down the line from the adoption of that landmark resolution, women are still not equally sitting at the tables of conflict prevention, mediation and resolution processes. We also note that integrating women as elements of United Nations peacekeeping forces remains a slow process. Women represented only 16 per cent of deployed military observers and staff officers in peacekeeping operations in 2017, while in the 32-year period between 1957 — the first time that a woman officially served in a United Nations peacekeeping mission — and 1989, only 20 women

served as uniformed peacekeepers. Almost 30 years later, despite the progress made, the numbers remain alarmingly low globally.

Against that background, I wish to focus my intervention on three main areas, as follows.

First, it is important to note that, as of 31 December 2018, African States represented 18 of the top 30 contributors of uniformed personnel to peacekeeping operations. Almost 50 per cent of all uniformed peacekeepers come from African Union member States, and despite the low global representation of women in peacekeeping, the African region's contribution was actually 63.4 per cent women in United Nations peacekeeping.

We continue to make efforts to increase the numbers, but in order to do so Member States — troop-contributing countries in particular — need to be adequately supported. In that regard, we must recognize the renewed efforts made by our African member States and the international community, including in the past year to include practical actions to qualitatively increase the number of women serving in peace operations. We must also recognize the African Union member States that recommitted to gender-sensitive and women-centred commitments for the 2019 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial pledge.

Nonetheless, the stark reality is that the international community still needs to better understand the role of women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping settings — alongside the gender dimensions of conflict — if our responses are to be effective. The joint AU-United Nations fact-finding missions on women and peace and security led on the ground in 2017 and 2018 in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Niger, Nigeria and South Sudan by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Executive Director of UN-Women clearly established that women who have been victims of war and conflict remain better engaged with female military and police rather than male officers. If left unconsidered, that could negatively impact any reconciliation and peacebuilding process.

In that context, the African Union leadership has called for all actors to step up their efforts to ensure

that women are full actors on the ground as actors in uniform and civilians in peace operations. We all know too well, particularly women serving in conflict-affected zones, that when women are marginalized from peace processes on all sides of the spectrum, durable peace has little chance to take root in post-conflict societies.

The second point is that the African Union is championing the implementation of women and peace and security commitments at the continental level. The AU is leading efforts to promote and bolster women's leadership in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution. The African Union takes action on all those areas under the "three Ps" slogan — women prevent, women protect, women participate. In that context, the AU has launched an action-oriented network of women in mediation called FemWise-Africa and partnered with the United Nations under the Joint Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security to ensure women's leadership in peace and security with the African Women Leaders Network.

The African Union has also assigned gender officers in the various peace support operations to ensure that women's voices are heard and amplified and that women participate in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding efforts. At the policy level, our continent counts commendable achievements, from inscribing the women and gender and peace and security perspectives into the African Peace and Security Architecture to the overall peace and security programmes. Africa currently counts 25 countries with national action plans on women and peace and security, meaning that African Member States constitute 31 per cent of countries globally with national action plans.

We have also adopted a code of conduct and zero-tolerance policy that outlines the AU's position against sexual violence, exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and military personnel. The code is shared with all troop-contributing countries and is integrated into all related training. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) already has a policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and other countries are working on that and other national strategies.

My third, and last, point is that the African Union, through the Department of Peace and Security, has redoubled efforts to address gender inequality and combat stereotypes in peacekeeping missions. It is in that spirit of inclusion that the African Union focused

its gender strategy in AMISOM on addressing some of the core barriers that prevent women from successfully participating in peacekeeping operation activities. By doing so, we aim to ensure that we build a more balanced peacekeeping environment that is welcoming to women.

In conclusion, the African Union would like to encourage Member States and partners to redouble efforts to close the gaps of the women and peace and security agenda, notably by reaffirming political commitments, qualitatively increasing the number of women leading in peacekeeping operations and ensuring a welcoming environment. Experience has shown that women can and must play an active role in the prevention of conflict, at negotiation tables, during the stabilization process through peace operations and in the reconstruction period after conflict. It is our shared responsibility to make it happen.

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

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): I commend the German presidency of the Security Council and Her Excellency Ms. Ursula von der Leyen for highlighting the important role that women play in peacekeeping. I wish to express my warm appreciation to the Secretary-General and today's briefers for their insightful briefings, which indicate that there is still a wide gap between word and deed when it comes to the women and peace and security agenda.

As the Secretary-General has envisioned, we must place gender parity at the highest level across the United Nations. To that end, we need to implement his peace and security architecture reform with greater collaboration between the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and UN-Women, both in the field and at Headquarters. Transformative change should be realized across all three pillars of the United Nations, in which women can be key catalysts and dynamic agents of progress. Only in that way will United Nations peacekeeping continue to be an important tool for conflict prevention and resolution.

We have to work hard if we want to increase the number of women in military and police contingents by 2020. That means that we need to encourage women to join the armed forces by breaking the stranglehold of patriarchy, cultural norms and taboos against women, creating new shifts in community awareness. Women

need to be empowered, not just in peacekeeping operations but in daily societal life, through investments in development, their education, economic opportunities and leadership training. It is important that they come to the forefront to lay the foundations for peaceful and stable societies, as resolution 1325 (2000) advocates.

Current statistics demonstrate that countries around the world deploy women to the United Nations at far lower levels than they are represented in domestic security forces. Many nations currently have women who are qualified to serve but are overlooked for training and field placement opportunities. That bypassing of women must be reversed. Women must also be given information about career opportunities in security forces, often concealed because of a false sense of male prerogative or prohibitions on the grounds of family duties or being at a greater risk of harm and attacks than men.

An erroneous belief also exists that the presence of women will decrease unit cohesion and effectiveness because of sexual violence within units. In fact, it has been found that female peacekeepers improve unit performance and help military commanders to fulfil their mandates. Even in communities, sexual exploitation and abuse is greatly reduced with the presence of women in peacekeeping operations. They also have better access to communities and can act as information conduits, and thereby provide early warning and contribute to security and community well-being.

In addition, current United Nations performance measures do not track the number, rank or function of female peacekeepers, whether units have been trained to prevent conflict-related sexual violence, or whether the vetting systems correctly identify peacekeepers credibly suspected of sexual exploitation and abuse. We therefore need to rightfully introduce those measures, which are critical to the fulfilment of peacekeeping mandates, to be added to the United Nations performance system.

To truly succeed, we need women's empowerment in times of war and peace. Most of all, it is critical to build capacity in women through South-South, North-South and trilateral cooperation and to empower them to be leaders capable of engaging in early warning, mediation, peace negotiations, peace agreements and confidence-building measures, from the local and

regional to the national and international levels. We encourage donor countries to prioritize educational programmes, allocate a greater number of scholarships to women and girls from conflict-affected countries and enable victims to transcend and take on leadership roles.

Everything we have recommended is what we are implementing in our own country. It is in that spirit that we are preparing our peacekeepers at the Kazakh peacekeeping training centre. Kazakhstan is fully committed to United Nations peacekeeping operations and is sending highly qualified and competent personnel, including females. Our female peacekeepers are deployed in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, and we plan to further increase their numbers by deploying them to other missions.

To conclude, we will join others in fully implementing the women and peace and security agenda.

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

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. The presence among us this morning of the Federal Minister of Defence of Germany is clear testimony to the importance that your country attaches to the topic of women and peace and security. I also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate France for its extremely successful presidency of the Council during the month of March. I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for all his efforts to making parity a reality at the United Nations, as well as Major General Kristin Lund and Ms. Lorna Merekaje for their briefings.

Morocco welcomes the initiative to convene this open debate on a topic that has taken on particular importance since the historic adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which is now at the centre of our debates — the role of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The choice of this topic is timely, a few days after the Peacekeeping Ministerial of 29 March, during which many delegations expressed their commitment to the greater representation of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Bearing in mind the importance and need to strengthen women's participation in peacekeeping operations, Morocco — a major contributor to

peacekeeping operations since the 1960s — has undertaken considerable efforts to achieve the target of 15 per cent female staff officers. Moreover, the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, which Morocco was one of the first countries to endorse, also provide for actions to be taken in that regard. We congratulate and strongly support the efforts and initiatives of the Secretary-General to promote gender equality and parity in all United Nations activities.

To date, Morocco has achieved the 15 per cent threshold and is already preparing to significantly increase its female contribution through specific pledges, particularly in terms of medical personnel, military observers and officers for the Civilian-Military Cooperation Unit. With that in mind, an all-female unit was deployed by the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces to the rapid deployment battalion of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Morocco will also contribute for the first time to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan with the deployment of a military observer group.

It is a reality highlighted by experience and studies that the increased participation of women can have a positive impact on the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions. We therefore welcome the launching of the Secretariat's uniformed gender-parity strategy, which proposes 25 per cent female participation for staff officers and military observers and 15 per cent for contingents. In that regard, and with a view to ensuring its full implementation, it would be useful to consider two important factors, including the number of troops deployed and the national considerations of troop- and police- contributing countries. Other elements should also be taken into account in order to facilitate the greater participation of women in peacekeeping operations, and I will refer to a few.

First, we should offer incentives to encourage women's participation. In that regard, we commend the Secretariat and Canada for launching the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations. We could, for example, consider shorter rotation periods. Secondly, we must ensure that the specific needs of women are taken into account across all missions, particularly in terms of housing. Thirdly, we must avoid restricting the full participation of women in mission activities by conditioning them with caveats. Fourthly, we should provide more training modules that are specifically

designed for women. And, fifthly, we should favour women candidates for civilian posts within missions.

Today's topic is not only about women's participation in peacekeeping operations but also political processes, mediation and conflict prevention. On those aspects too, efforts have been made by all actors, including Governments, the United Nations, regional organizations or civil society. Morocco is committed to supporting mediation as a means for the peaceful resolution of disputes and ensuring the full participation of women in peace processes. Therefore, as part of our joint initiative with Spain on mediation in the Mediterranean, various activities have been undertaken, particularly in strengthening the capacities of women mediators as well as active participation in the various networks of women mediators.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to pay a heartfelt tribute to all of the women and men deployed on the ground in the service of peace and international security, often in very difficult circumstances and at the risk of putting their lives in peril.

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

Mr. Penaranda (Philippines): The world will remain stuck in a cycle of violence and conflicts as long as nations put almost every other issue ahead of equality for women. That is a takeaway from the 2019 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial held here two weeks ago. Today's open debate is crucial as we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. That resolution deals with women's strategic roles as peacekeepers, negotiators and mediators and their contributions to the narratives of war and peace. It is an operational and moral imperative to recruit more women peacekeepers.

From the Vancouver Peacekeeping Ministerial in November 2017 to the 2019 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial, the Philippines has strongly committed itself to deploying more women peacekeepers. More emphatically than ever before, the Philippines joins the United Nations in calling for more female peacekeepers to enhance the holistic effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. More than 50 per cent of our total deployed peacekeeping personnel in six United Nations missions — South Sudan, Darfur, the Central African Republic, Haiti, Mali and the India/Pakistan border — are women. That

is well beyond the 15 per cent requirement for troop- and police-contributing countries.

Since the launching of the second cycle of its national action plan on women and peace and security, in March 2017, the Philippines has achieved the following milestones under the three pillars of empowerment and participation, protection and prevention, and promotion and mainstreaming. The Philippines is one of the first countries to formulate and implement a regional action plan to localize resolution 1325 (2000). The following are the Philippines' inputs.

On the first pillar, among the provisions of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, which was signed by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte on 26 July 2018, is the allocation of reserved seats for women in the Bangsamoro Parliament and Cabinet. The continuing efforts of the all-female Hijab troopers — as members of the armed forces and the Philippine national police, in partnership with different Government agencies, such as the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and civil society organizations — are being undertaken through programmes and projects focused on social healing and reconciliation and preventing violent extremism.

On the second pillar, the Bangsamoro Organic Law upholds and protects the fundamental rights of women, including the right to engage in lawful employment and to be protected from exploitation, abuse or discrimination.

On the third pillar, the agency strategic action plans operationalize the commitments of national Government agencies under the national action plan. Capacity-building programmes for local Government units, Government agencies and civil society organizations are also being conducted to ensure that the women and peace and security agenda is mainstreamed in the plans and budgets for gender and development programmes.

The Philippines will hold a forum exploring various sub-themes of women and peace and security in order to familiarize participants, mainly from the Philippines' security sector, on the impact and significance of women's participation in peacekeeping around the world, with particular emphasis on the Philippine experience. The Philippines further supports the calls of Member States to appoint gender advisers as members of crisis management teams in peacekeeping missions and for the United Nations to commit resources for mission leaders.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the conviction of the Philippine Government is grounded in the experience that the gender that binds the wounds of war, comforts its widows and shelters children in conflict has the strongest motivation and the best approaches to stop the outbreak of war and restore a broken peace.

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

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important open debate. We welcome the continuing attention of the Security Council to the women and peace and security agenda, and we thank the briefers for their insightful remarks.

Resolution 1325 (2000) constitutes an important milestone, not only because it addresses the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls but also because it represents a landmark achievement in terms of ensuring the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in all stages of the conflict cycle and the peace continuum. As we approach its twentieth anniversary, there is ample room for discussion on concrete strategies throughout the United Nations system to enhance its implementation. That is particularly the case for United Nations peacekeeping.

Female personnel have already proven that they can perform the same roles to the same standards and under the same difficult conditions as their male counterparts. They also broaden the skill set available on the ground as they make unique and substantive contributions to peacekeeping operations. Their presence in the field empowers women in the host communities and contributes to making the peacekeeping force more approachable to women and young people in the community. As such, women are key to the success of United Nations peacekeeping missions. Women peacekeepers also act as role models in the local environment, inspiring women and girls in often male-dominated societies to push for their own rights and participation in peace processes.

Thanks to the efforts and commitments of the United Nations, the rate of female participation in peacekeeping forces has increased in recent years, but it still remains below United Nations targets. Despite the evidence that inclusiveness improves peacekeeping efficiency and effectiveness, women remain underrepresented in actual operations, especially among uniformed personnel. We welcome initiatives

such as the uniformed gender-parity strategy and the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, which aim to help overcome barriers to increasing women's participation in peace operations.

In our joint efforts, we can improve the situation on the ground if we make good use of disaggregated data on women to draw conclusions. Reporting should have an integrated gender perspective that feeds into the Secretary-General's recommendations and conclusions. In that sense, gender experts and advisers in the missions contribute significantly to the overall success of United Nations peacekeeping. We should make sure to continue to make use of that asset in terms of training, advising, assisting, mentoring and supporting the leadership and relevant units of peacekeeping missions.

The involvement of United Nations peacekeepers in sexual exploitation and abuse fundamentally undermines the very foundation of the United Nations, its credibility and the trust that the United Nations flag enjoys. The zero-tolerance policy should be strictly implemented against personnel involved in such cases until the perpetrators are punished and those utterly disgraceful acts cease completely. Turkey fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts to that end.

We should not overlook the fact that the ultimate responsibility for the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda lies with individual countries. In that spirit, we should make sure to eliminate any discrimination or barriers against women's participation in peace operations. Turkey also supports the empowerment and well-being of women and girls in various emergency, conflict or post-conflict situations through its comprehensive development assistance programmes. The projects we carry out in Afghanistan and Somalia, especially in the fields of education and health services, are concrete examples of our efforts to that end.

At the same time, we attach great importance to ensuring the collaboration and coordination of our efforts throughout the United Nations system and continue to encourage more women to participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions. We also actively promote the implementation of the relevant resolutions in other international and regional platforms, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and NATO.

Successive Security Council resolutions since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) have contributed

to the establishment of a sound normative framework. Despite that achievement, however, today's debate indicates that there is still the need for further serious improvement in involving women in all decision-making processes aimed at preventing conflict as well as building and sustaining peace.

To create lasting peace and stability, we need women's voices in every process, from conflict prevention and conflict resolution to reconciliation and post-conflict recovery. The recent conflict-settlement history of our globe is full of success stories of women who played crucial roles in the establishment of peace and security. We should build on those achievements and ensure women's rightful and meaningful participation in peace operations.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Archbishop Auza: Almost 20 years ago, the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) called for women to be increasingly represented at decision-making levels in peace processes and in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, to be protected from violence in situations of armed conflict and — because they often bear the brunt of violent conflict — and to participate actively as agents of change for durable peace. As Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix has emphasized, peacekeeping works effectively when women play meaningful roles and when women in host communities are directly engaged. Our discussion today should consider the role of women in two particular contexts.

The first context is that of the women who take part in United Nations peacekeeping operations around the world, whose numbers, in line with the Secretary-General's key priority, are increasing. They are daughters, sisters, wives and mothers, who bring to their work not only their courage, professionalism and sense of duty but also a special sensitivity that enables them to engage more effectively with local populations; better assess the real needs on the ground by offering women, boys and girls the opportunity to share their grievances and concerns; and galvanize local efforts to say no to violence and misery and yes to peace and development.

That brings us to the second context — that of the women who live in conflict zones or who have experienced the trauma of war. They play an essential

role in rebuilding trust, offering insight and facilitating reconciliation. Some of them have political responsibilities and have been key players in negotiating peace deals. It is encouraging to see that more women are involved in emerging democratic processes, strengthening the rule of law, giving voice to the voiceless and so on. Yet the vast majority of women who make a contribution do so through their commitment at the local level. Women who have seen their families and communities torn apart, their villages and homes savagely destroyed, their dignity violated and their loved ones taken are often, by their inner strength, courage and resilience, the most inspiring witnesses with the capacity to sow hope, open up new prospects and bring people together. Their presence at the negotiating table and during each and every stage of peace processes is a necessity and an invaluable benefit. They ensure inclusivity, credibility and durability. It is of the utmost importance to guarantee that their voices are heard.

In crisis situations, female leadership is often found in faith-based communities, where women excel on the path to dialogue, collaboration and non-violence. They actively engage in peacebuilding and the prevention of relapse into conflict. Their involvement normally brings about large and lasting dividends. It is important, therefore, not to overlook such a valid contribution but to seek ways to further harness these efforts, especially in regions where religion has been manipulated to incite division or prevent peace processes from effectively taking root.

My delegation wishes to commend and express gratitude to all women peacekeepers and peacebuilders in the world, in particular those who work to promote the greater involvement of women at all levels within United Nations peacekeeping missions, which remain the most recognizable presence of the United Nations across the world.

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

Mr. Prasad (Fiji): I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to address the members of the Council. I congratulate you, Mr. President, during this joint German and French presidency, on bringing forward the subject of women's contribution to peace and security for open discussion in a more open setting.

Women bear the tragedies of conflicts disproportionately. Their suffering has multiple

dimensions, from food and water deprivation to sexual violence to outright killings. We confront today this same tragedy across many other countries and across several United Nations peace operations.

Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2242 (2015), on women and peace and security, all stress the centrality of participation by women in peacebuilding and in helping to achieve security. Those resolutions are powerfully reinforced by the Secretary-General's personal drive and commitment to gender equality across the United Nations system.

In peace and during times of conflict, women play a critical role in keeping communities together. When development and political institutions fail their communities, women bear the overwhelming pain of failure; seeking out livelihoods for from ever-dwindling resources, fighting to maintain access to services such as health care and pitching in when services collapse, at great cost to themselves.

Fiji welcomes the Secretary-General's determination to bring peacebuilding, peacekeeping and development closer together. We need only to look at lessons learned from recent conflicts to understand why that is so fundamental.

In all conflicts, long before guns and violence are unleashed, food, water and health services become weaponized. Women peacekeepers are intuitively better at recognizing the slow weaponization of food, water and essential services. It is therefore essential that women be fully involved in peace processes and be part of political settlements. When they are involved, peace settlements are enduring. When they are not, peace settlements are more likely to collapse. Women bring empathy, practical understanding and deep insights to such processes.

Women will always strengthen peace processes. Failure is not an option; they know that failure will result in immediate consequences for themselves and their children. Therefore, by making United Nations peacekeeping more diverse, it is far more likely that peace operations will include women, and thereby enhance prospects for enduring peace.

The Fijian Government seeks to empower women to reach their full potential across all sectors of society. The new Fiji Parliament has double the number of women, who now represent 20 per cent. A lot more work is required, of course.

Fiji has chosen to serve the world through peacekeeping. Its peacekeepers have played important roles in Kosovo, Namibia, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Timor-Leste, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, the Sudan, Solomon Islands in a non-United Nations arrangement, Papua New Guinea and South Sudan, among other countries. We have lost 59 peacekeepers during those engagements. We have learned a lot from those experiences, including that a good peace operation, at its core, is about broadening spaces for politics to kick in.

Thousands of United Nations peacekeepers interact with and protect local communities every day. The way in which they interact matters. Peacekeeping is about the soft skills that missions bring to deliver their mandates under extraordinary circumstances. They include the ability to understand cultures and values and the ability to see how women and children become extraordinarily deprived in conflicts early on. Fiji pays significant attention to strengthening those soft skills in its training and preparation.

We know that when peacekeepers strike a positive rapport with communities, they enhance prospects for reconciliation. Through our many peacekeeping efforts, we know that women peacekeepers at checkpoints are far better at diffusing tensions; and that women peacekeepers are far better in understanding the hidden dimensions of conflict, such as the seizure of humanitarian food assistance. Women in medical support units help overcome high barriers to health care access, and women peacekeepers are far better at identifying signs of systemic sexual violence.

Fiji is deeply committed to increasing the participation of women in its peacekeeping. Learning from our many experiences across many peace operations, Fiji is committed to accelerating the recruitment of women in its army and navy. The United Nations gender report published in January notes that Fiji has achieved the following standards: 21 per cent of our staff officers in United Nations peace operations are women; approximately 10 per cent of our military contingents are women; and 51 per cent of our individual police officers are women. A lot more needs to be done — we are the first to admit it.

The Police Commissioner heading the United Nations Mission in South Sudan is a Fijian woman. We are incredibly proud of Commissioner Unaisi Vuniwaqa. She serves as a great role model for us. Today we stand

in solidarity with Superintendent Vilisi Waqavesi, based in Darfur, as difficult political circumstances unfold in the Sudan.

As a small country, we understand our limits. Fiji looks forward to working closely with our partners — Australia, New Zealand, China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Indonesia — on training and developing our women peacekeepers. We are strengthening gender perspectives and mainstreaming gender across predeployment and deployment and across our operations. Fiji is launching a new regional partnership with Australia and New Zealand to reinforce that effort. We are committed to the United Nations quest to improve the participation of women across peace operations. That is our quest as well.

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

Mrs. Furman (Israel): I would like to thank the German presidency for organizing this important open debate, and the briefers for their comprehensive insights.

Nineteen years ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), calling for enhanced efforts by the international community to increase the participation of women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations. As the Secretary-General stated two weeks ago at the opening of the Peacekeeping Ministerial, women play an essential role in improving the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions, as well as their engagement with local communities. Women are often the first victims in conflicts and wars, being more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, but often they are also the first to advocate for peace. When women are on the front line of peacekeeping operations and are part of peacebuilding teams, they function as a catalyst for trust and cooperation, thereby enhancing the ability of the United Nations to fulfil its mandates for peace and security.

Since the establishment of the State of Israel, women have been an integral part of our country's defence forces. Initially, only a few positions were open to women. However, throughout the years their opportunities were expanded through Israel Defence Forces (IDF) reform, as well as individual pioneers who fought for equality within the military. One such pioneer was Alice Miller, whose attempt to become an IDF pilot was denied based on her gender. Miller's appeal to the Supreme Court in 1995 brought about

the acceptance of woman into the air force academy. A few years later, the IDF appointed the first women's affairs adviser to the Chief of Staff. That was born out of the recognition that the IDF would not be able to reach its full potential without ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment for women to serve in.

In the past decade, we have witnessed how changes within the system to accommodate women have helped us advance towards gender parity. Today over 85 per cent of positions in the IDF are open to women, and more than 30 per cent of IDF officers are female. Of all the women serving in the IDF, 20 per cent hold officer positions, while of all the men serving only 10 per cent are officers. We may not have achieved full gender parity yet, but we are well on our way and efforts are ongoing.

We all agree that there is a need for more women in United Nations peacekeeping, and Israel is pleased to see that the seeds planted 19 years ago by resolution 1325 (2000) are starting to grow. More women are taking on key managerial roles in the United Nations, and the number of women in peacekeeping has doubled. However, despite those achievements, as was mentioned in the Peacekeeping Ministerial, we still have a long way to go.

We commend the Secretary-General for his leadership on gender parity thus far and recognize that the United Nations is making tremendous strides. However, in our view, there is an essential component missing in order to encourage the full inclusion of women in peacekeeping settings: the adjustment of the environment and facilities in field missions. It is not enough to simply set targets. If we want more women to serve in the field, we must create an inclusive environment by ensuring their safety within United Nations compounds and providing them with the facilities and services necessary, such as on-base women's health services, accommodation for families and more. Our continued focus should be on increasing the number of women in key positions throughout the Organization by adjusting the working conditions and services available to accommodate them.

If we are to encourage women to serve in peacekeeping, the United Nations and its States Members must endeavour to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment in the field. The United Nations will be able to reach its full potential only

when both halves of the world's population are involved and contributing.

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

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): We would like to thank the presidency of the Security Council for the choice of theme for today's open debate. We appreciate the importance that Germany attaches to the subject, demonstrated also by the participation of the Federal Minister of Defence, Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, earlier today. This meeting provides an important opportunity to reflect on ways to strengthen collective efforts towards more efficient and effective peacekeeping by increasing women's participation and representation.

The Government of Armenia attaches particular importance to reforms aimed at promoting women's representation at all decision-making levels. We firmly believe that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of conflicts, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts, as well as in contributing to lasting and durable solutions. Ensuring the solid and meaningful participation of women in conflict resolution processes is instrumental, as it has been proven to amplify chances for credible and sustainable peace.

As next year will mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), Armenia stands ready to support the implementation of commitments for the promotion of the women and peace and security agenda. We fully support the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the efforts undertaken towards the equal and meaningful participation of women at all stages of peace processes.

In February this year, the Government of Armenia adopted a national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The plan was elaborated through an inclusive and comprehensive process, involving Government agencies, civil society and international organizations. The document prioritizes the enhancement of training and career development possibilities for women with a view to increasing their participation in peacekeeping as well as in peacebuilding activities. A particular focus has been placed on vulnerable population groups, including women from border communities and women affected by conflict.

The involvement of women in peacekeeping missions is among the priorities of reforms implemented by the Armenian armed forces. With the aim of promoting a greater role played by women, Armenia has already deployed women peacekeepers to United Nations and United Nations-mandated operations. More women will soon be deployed to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon during the next rotation cycle this summer in order to ensure compliance with the 15 per cent target set by the United Nations.

Non-governmental organizations and civil society networks have been instrumental in raising the bar for women's participation in peace- and security-related activities. Since 2015, the HALO Trust has been training and employing local women in its humanitarian demining missions in the conflict-affected areas of Nagorno Karabakh. Initiatives like that have multiple economic, social and humanitarian benefits for local communities in overcoming the effects of conflict, towards a more peaceful and secure future.

The outcome document of the seventeenth Summit of the Heads of State and Government of La Francophonie, held in Yerevan on 11 and 12 October 2018 under the theme "Living Together", also calls for continued efforts to ensure the participation of women in peacekeeping operations and for a greater role for women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Armenia fully recognizes the importance of women's empowerment and how it is linked and intertwined with sustainable peace and development efforts at different levels. An important example of women's participation in peacebuilding efforts is the Women for Peace initiative, led by the spouse of the Prime Minister of Armenia, as an inclusive platform for women and mothers to promote peace and reconciliation in our region and beyond.

Armenia is fully committed to the promotion of gender-sensitive policies as a priority in our national and foreign policy agenda. As a member of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and having assumed the chairmanship of the Commission for the upcoming session, Armenia will be supporting efforts aimed at ensuring gender equality through the enhancement of women's participation in all areas of economic, political and social life, including through the substantial involvement of women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping activities.

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

Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein): We thank you, Mr. President, and Minister Von der Leyen for convening this open debate on an important and timely topic.

Stronger political will and leadership are needed to empower women to participate fully in all stages of building peace, particularly in times of political transition. It is therefore important that women's representation in peacekeeping contingents increase rapidly. The inclusion of women at all stages of the conflict cycle must be one element of a broader change towards a system based on full equality and free from gender stereotypes that have historically kept women away from police and military roles.

Women peacekeepers improve the operational effectiveness, accessibility and credibility of peacekeeping missions by providing contingents with diverse perspectives and a broad range of skills. According to studies, women peacekeepers help strengthen relationships with communities, including by being able to access information from populations and venues that are closed off to men. Strong relationships with communities lead to more successful dispute resolution and strengthen the ability of missions to fulfil their mandates, including the protection of civilians.

Women's participation in the security sector is associated with fewer misconduct complaints and improved citizens' perceptions of force integrity. Women help to mainstream a gender perspective across all components and operations of a mission and facilitate a cultural change that disrupts harmful gender stereotypes. A visible presence of female peacekeepers empowers women and girls in host communities and can raise women's participation rates in local police and military forces, improving the capacity of national forces to take over security responsibilities. Women's participation in peacekeeping also contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, on gender equality, and SDG 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, both of which are catalysts for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We note the importance of resolution 2242 (2015) in encouraging the deployment of women and the precedent it sets, particularly in its endorsement of incentives to bolster numbers of female peacekeepers. We support the measures aimed at implementing its provisions as

part of the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity. At the same time, more consistent mission mandates are needed on issues pertaining to women and peace and security. In 2017, only 16 per cent of the 25 gender advisers deployed to field missions or the offices of special envoys were at senior level. Missions should better incorporate gender advisers into their work as part of the mission leadership structure and provide them with all the resources necessary to be able to carry out their functions.

Member States should increase their efforts to encourage female police and military personnel to participate in peacekeeping operations and eliminate barriers to women's full inclusion. Improving conditions of service and targeted recruitment strategies towards women, in particular through the media, can contribute to those efforts. Moreover, female peacekeepers can be effective agents of change only in environments that are free from discrimination and unfair social norms and attitudes, and where they are not deprived of their rights and opportunities.

Finally, Liechtenstein welcomes and supports your call, Mr. President, for questions for the briefers, as a way of making our debates more interactive. We are aware that the briefers have already left, but we would be interested in their views on the following two questions. First, how can peacekeeping operations better follow up with women who leave missions, in order to learn lessons from their experiences? Secondly, why do police- and troop-contributing countries often deploy women to the United Nations at levels lower than their proportion in their domestic security forces?

The President: I thank the representative of Liechtenstein for his questions; we will have to see how we go about getting a response.

I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mr. Jinga (Romania): It seems to me that something has changed in the Chamber — there is more light. Allow me, first of all, to commend Germany for organizing this debate. I am very confident that, under your presidency, Sir, the Security Council will continue to build on this important topic.

Romania associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would now like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

Women peacekeepers play a special role that is indispensable in laying the foundations of sustainable

peace in conflict zones. It has been proven that the presence of women in United Nations peacekeeping missions has a positive effect on the local population. In fact, women and children are the most vulnerable in terms of becoming victims of violence. It is a fact that, for male peacekeepers, it is difficult to overcome social and cultural boundaries required to build trust with them. That is precisely where female peacekeepers have to fill the gap by providing victims and local communities with a more reliable sense of security and trust. From our perspective, that ability should be considered a vital component of any peace operation.

In that regard, we have a proven successful example from Afghanistan, where Romania provided female engagement teams and managed to interact regularly with local women, thereby building trust and confidence in, I would say, a very complex environment.

Moreover, there is a clear need for more women in command positions, which is critical to ensure the United Nations Blue Helmets deliver on their tasks. Let me share with the Council one relevant national example. We are proud that one woman — a Romanian police officer — received the International Female Police Peacekeeper title in 2015.

During Romania's chairmanship of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2018, listening to the voices of women was high on our agenda. In that regard, the topic of financing the gender dimension of peacebuilding was included in the PBC annual session devoted to empowering youth and women as agents of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel region. In addition, during the working visits I paid last year to the Sahel region and West Africa, I met with women civil society groups and women leaders. I also had the privilege to understand, in depth, that women must be included in all peace processes and that their participation at all levels of society is essential for peace to last.

Member States are taking concrete steps towards improving female representation in United Nations peace operations. I would like to take this opportunity to express our full support for one of the most recent developments undertaken by Canada and the United Nations in launching the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations and setting up the Elsie Fund to support the initiative. We also warmly welcome Germany's launch today of a global female peacekeepers network initiative.

At the same time, Romania strongly supports the efforts carried out by the Secretary-General through his Action for Peacekeeping initiative and acts to implement resolution 1325 (2000), as well as the women and peace and security agenda, especially by continuing to integrate the gender perspective in our decision-making processes. We equally welcome the Secretary-General's strategy on gender parity for the period 2018-2028, which recognizes the importance of women's participation in peace operations. As a result, Romania has already surpassed the 16 per cent objective for 2019. In fact, 17 per cent of Romania's military observers and staff officers deployed in the field are women, as compared to an average of 13 per cent among Member States. We will continue working to improve this figure.

As one of the endorsing countries of the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Romania welcomes the development of the light coordination mechanism in order to increase partnerships for training and capacity-building. At the regional level, my country has established a mobile training team focused on gender mainstreaming in security and defence. Its first audience was the Southeastern Europe Defence Initiative, where our trainers with United Nations experience delivered a key leadership course at the South-Eastern European Brigade headquarters.

Moreover, Romania is increasing the number of security personnel trained to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence and is supporting the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse with an expert on military law.

Finally, I believe in changing the narrative on the role of women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes. Men and boys should also be actively involved. A good example in that respect is the HeForShe campaign, in which the President of Romania is one of the 10 champions in advocating gender equality.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM). This is a summarized version of our statement.

Everything that pertains to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations is a matter of crucial importance to NAM, bearing in mind the fact that 88 per cent of peacekeeping personnel deployed in the field ground come from NAM member States. Therefore, we emphasize the need for effective triangular consultations or, in other words, a renewed and revitalized alliance between the Security Council, police- and troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat with shared responsibility. That will allow us to undertake objective evaluations and harness the potential of the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

Moreover, NAM reaffirms its principled position regarding such operations, which must be carried out in strict compliance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. At the same time, we stress that respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and non-interference in the internal affairs of States are fundamental elements of joint efforts for the promotion of international peace and security. In that regard, NAM reiterates that respect for those principles is essential for the success of operations, in particular those with civilian-protection mandates.

Furthermore, recognizing that operations have been an indispensable tool in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security, we emphasize that, in the context of a comprehensive approach and the objective of achieving lasting peace and security, the implementation of all tasks entrusted to operations must be paired with and supported in parallel by a broad and participatory political process in order to sustain peace. That process should be well planned and carefully designed, find its basis in national ownership and support from the international community, and operate with the consent and commitment of the parties concerned. Peacekeeping operations should not be used as an alternative to addressing the root causes of conflicts, or to manage conflicts themselves.

The Movement welcomed the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and supported his Declaration of Shared Commitments, which is aimed at ensuring collective efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of peace operations, with a view to addressing changing realities. Similarly, the Movement stands ready to translate the Declaration into a practical, integrated and mutually reinforcing implementation framework. In that regard, we would like to note Egypt's efforts to that end, including

through the introduction of the Cairo road map. As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, the States members of the Movement express their commitment to increasing the number of female civilians and uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations at all levels, including in key positions, and to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes.

In conclusion, the Movement takes this opportunity to pay tribute to, and acknowledge the commendable work of, the troops — men and women — who in many cases do their jobs under adverse conditions on the ground, in contexts of armed conflict, putting their lives at risk on a daily basis. Our sincere appreciation goes out to all of them, as well as to those who lost their lives in the field defending the United Nations flag and the cause of peace.

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

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): I would like to commend Germany's leadership in convening today's open debate. I would also like to thank the briefers for their insights on how the international community can best support and strengthen efforts to increase women's participation in peacekeeping.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Bangladesh, then as a member of the Security Council and one of the core sponsors of resolution 1325 (2000), was closely associated with the adoption of that historic document. This was our humble endeavour: to ensure women's rights and roles in the maintenance of international peace and security, which paved the way towards many subsequent resolutions, namely, resolutions 2242 (2015), 2378 (2017), 2382 (2017) and 2436 (2018).

In terms of maintaining international peace and security, we take pride in our modest contribution of troops and police to that noble objective. We are gradually increasing our female peacekeepers in keeping with our commitment to the United Nations. We have sent 150 to 200 female peacekeepers every year since 2010. So far, Bangladesh has deployed over 1,600 female peacekeepers and stands fifth among the

troop- and police-contributing countries in contributing female peacekeepers.

We earlier deployed two full contingents of all-female formed police units in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti. Bangladesh has deployed female officers as Contingent Commanders in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Bangladesh has also deployed two female helicopter pilots in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Currently, we have one platoon of female troops in an infantry contingent in that country. We are also planning to send an all-female platoon with all future contingents. We have also kept one female police contingent ready for the United Nations Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System, which we hope will be deployed soon.

To achieve the target of 15 per cent female staff officer/military observers (SO/UNMOs) in United Nations peacekeeping operations set by United Nations, Bangladesh has taken all possible measures. To that end, Bangladesh is required to deploy 22 female officers as SO/UNMOs. We have already deployed 14 female officers and are in the process of deploying six more. Our experience shows that women peacekeepers can play a very effective role in winning the hearts and minds of the host population, which is crucial for any peacekeeping operation.

While we work towards ensuring participation by more female peacekeepers, we must ensure that women can participate fully and meaningfully in peace operations at all levels — in civilian, police, and military contexts — including at decision-making levels. We also need to identify the country-specific challenges to increasing the number of female peacekeepers and work together to remove barriers for their recruitment, retention and career progress. In that regard, we strongly support the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, the Santos Cruz action plan and the uniformed gender-parity strategy of the Department of Peace Operations. We also laud the Secretary-General's efforts aimed at ensuring gender parity in senior appointments under the system-wide strategy on gender parity.

The Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has ensured women's political and economic participation through specific statutory provisions, affirmative actions and appropriate incentives. We are continuously working towards further empowerment of women in all aspects of our social life by providing them with necessary skills, education and training, and by eliminating all sorts of discrimination and barriers against them. We are in the final stages of drafting our national plan of action on women and peace and security, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000) and its successor resolutions.

To encourage and facilitate women's participation in our uniformed forces, we have lifted all prohibitions that prevent women from joining our combat forces. To encourage more females to come and join uniformed forces, we are offering their spouses, if they are working, to be posted in the same area, and we are providing child care and other female-friendly facilities to them. We are also rewarding achievers with our highest national awards. For example, one female brigadier general was given Bangladesh's highest national civilian award for her contribution to the army.

We are aware of the barriers to women, including sexual exploitation and abuse. Bangladesh has always stood strongly in support of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy against all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is a member of the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations. We are also a signatory of the voluntary compact with the Secretary-General on the commitment to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition, we have made it an important component of our predeployment training.

While the Secretariat, the Security Council and Member States are doing their best to ensure effective and meaningful participation by female peacekeepers, we should not be complacent. Both the Organization and the Security Council could bring forward new ideas and proposals, provide greater incentives for female peacekeepers to participate, assist them in adjusting to local conditions and see to it that the specific needs of mothers who are working as peacekeepers are accommodated. We believe that adequate facilities such as six-month rotations, child-care support back home, appropriate incentives, assistance with logistical issues, including accommodation and so forth, need to be ensured if we are to increase the number of

women in the field. We are happy to note that Canada, in partnership with the United Nations, has launched the Elsie Initiative Fund to remove barriers for women peacekeepers and encourage greater participation.

In conclusion, I reiterate that we in Bangladesh have making our best efforts to increase women's participation as uniformed and civilian peacekeepers.

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

Mr. Giacomelli da Silva (Brazil): Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate, as well as the briefers for their insightful presentations. Brazil welcomes this opportunity to exchange views and to learn from the best practices of other countries.

Brazil recognizes the crucial role played by uniformed and civilian women in peacekeeping, as outlined in Brazil's first national action plan on women and peace and security.

It is with great satisfaction that I can inform the Council that the Brazilian national action plan, adopted in March 2017 and initially effective for two years, was extended for four more years. We expect that this extended period of implementation will allow us to continue to advance towards fulfilling the goals of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on the topic.

Brazil's commitment to increasing the presence of uniformed women in peacekeeping is a long-term project. I am, however, pleased to be able to share some positive results achieved within the first two years of the implementation of Brazil's national action plan.

In 2017 the Brazilian Army Academy admitted, for the first time, 34 women to train for combat careers. More recently, in 2019, the Brazilian navy started to welcome women candidates for all operative combat positions, enabling them to be part of navy troops deployed abroad.

Concerning Brazilian women who are already deployed, we also celebrate the fact that Brazil is close to the target set by the Secretariat for military and staff officers, with approximately around 15 per cent and 12 per cent of women in each category, respectively. Nevertheless, we remain committed to increasing these numbers as well as those related to civilian and police officers. In this regard, we welcome the progress made

possible by the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028 in facilitating conditions for the deployment of uniformed and civilian women.

Furthermore, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has eagerly sought to increase awareness among women of opportunities for civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as to make sure that women are adequately represented in matters relating to international peace and security inside the Ministry's bureaucracy. The achievement of these goals is central to Brazil's national action plan.

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda must remain a priority for the Council. In this regard, Brazil recalls the importance of instruments such as the 2015 Global Study on resolution 1325 (2000) conducted by UN-Women, which inspired Brazil's decision to formulate a national action plan.

In our view, the upcoming celebration could be an opportunity to evaluate the progress achieved and the challenges ahead. It could also motivate those Member States that have yet to adopt their own national action plans to do so.

While we recognize the positive results achieved, we must acknowledge that the challenges ahead are manifold and significant. In overcoming those difficulties, we find that positive role models are important at both a personal and a collective level. With this in mind, I would like to once again congratulate Commander Marcia Andrade Braga, a Brazilian Navy officer currently serving as gender adviser for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, who a few days ago received the United Nations Military Gender Advocate Award. Commander Braga has now joined many other Brazilians who are role models for uniformed and civilian women and whose efforts inspire us to continue striving for the greater participation of women in matters related to international peace and security.

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

Mr. Ke (Cambodia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Germany on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month and for having organized this important debate. I would also like to

thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency António Guterres, and Major General Kristin Lund for the informative briefing on the issue at hand.

Since 2006, Cambodia has contributed thousands of troops to serve in some of the most dangerous conflict zones throughout the world. Today, more than 800 Cambodians serve in peacekeeping operations in the Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Lebanon, Mali, the Central African Republic, Syria and Cyprus.

Through our engagement in United Nations peacekeeping operations, Cambodia recognizes the importance of human security and considers women to be the driving force in maintaining the culture of peace in our country and globally. Cambodia wishes to reiterate its commitment in line with the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Accordingly, Cambodia is fully committed to increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels and in key positions. Increasing women's participation in peacekeeping operations is necessary not only to guarantee gender parity among the forces, but also to improve mission effectiveness and promote stability among the affected populations on the ground.

Indeed, increasing women's participation can help reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, improve policing on the ground, contribute to effective intelligence-gathering efforts and improve the process of dispute settlement among local populations. These are but a few of the benefits that women bring to peacekeeping as indispensable members of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

In line with resolution 2242 (2015) and its call for a revised strategy to double the number of women in the military and police contingents of United Nations peacekeeping operations, Cambodia supports the Secretary-General's efforts in this regard.

Currently, Cambodia has deployed 42 uniformed women to peacekeeping operations in various missions—11 in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan; four in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; 17 in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; and 10 in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. The Royal Government of Cambodia is determined to gradually

increase the proportion of women in peacekeeping operations to 20 per cent.

As efforts are made to promote gender parity, partners must come together and provide support through financial and technical assistance. Such a team effort would ensure the speedier integration of United Nations peacekeeping forces while helping to build the capacities of States that may not have the resources or the expertise to fully implement the necessary strategies by themselves.

In that connection, I wish to highlight that, in addition to the necessary skills, English training is very important for uniformed women so that they can effectively communicate in performing their mission.

In conclusion, Cambodia stands together with all its partners in support of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. We assure the Council that we will continue working diligently to improve the lives of the most vulnerable populations through integrated, accountable, well-coordinated and effective peacekeeping efforts.

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

Mrs. Pejanović Đurišić (Montenegro): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this meeting and to commend your strong commitment to this important issue on the United Nations agenda. I also thank today's briefers for their valuable inputs to this debate.

As a member of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, Montenegro aligns itself with the statement made by Canada on behalf of the Group. Montenegro also aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I will, however, add a few remarks in my national capacity.

In many countries of the world, including Montenegro, women are not adequately involved in the armed forces, in particular at the command and decision-making levels. Therefore, in the process of reforming our defence system, gender equality has been largely considered as a matter of building up human resources. As a result of our continuous efforts, the number of women in the armed forces has increased from 8.7 per cent in 2011 to 10.6 per cent in 2019, as has the number of women applying for admission to foreign military academies and for employment in the armed forces, as contractual soldiers, officers and

civilian personnel. Seven women have participated in the peacekeeping mission of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. The number of women employed at the Ministry of Defence accounts for 42.9 per cent of its personnel, with that rate being 14.7 per cent if the army of Montenegro is also taken into account. By actively promoting possibilities for women's education in foreign military academies, the number of women in positions that were once typically filled by men has increased. We now have a woman pilot, a woman commander of a navigational ship squad and women as leaders of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear platoons, departments for mobile liaison systems, engineer platoons and intelligence and reconnaissance platoons, as well as a female Deputy Commander of the Air Force Operational Centre. Next year, a Montenegrin female cadet will graduate from the prestigious United States Military Academy at West Point.

Those statistics still indicate an insufficient number of women, but reflect our clear commitment to reaching both the national goals and our common aspirations under the United Nations peacekeeping agenda, including the United Nations uniformed gender parity strategy for the period 2018-2028 and related initiatives. Therefore, in 2016, the Ministry of Defence adopted a strategy for human resources management, followed by several human-resources-management plans and policies, aimed at creating equal opportunities for women and men to join the armed forces. Furthermore, in June 2018, the Ministry of Defence adopted guidelines for increasing women's participation in the army of Montenegro, defining very specific goals — to ensure that more qualified and motivated female candidates apply for admission to the armed forces and military education programmes and that the selection process for admission to the service and education programmes takes into consideration gender equality to strengthen the professional development of women in the army; ensure that career advancement for women is not hindered owing to formal and/or informal obstacles; ensure the implementation of prevention and protection mechanisms for sexual harassment; encourage and train women to participate in international missions and operations; and provide gender-responsive budgeting.

At the regional level, Montenegro, together with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of North Macedonia, participates in the implementation of a regional project on strengthening regional cooperation

in integrating the gender perspective into the security sector in the Western Balkans, financed by the Kingdom of Norway and the Slovak Republic. In the forthcoming period, in accordance with our long-term defence development plan for the period 2019-2029, Montenegro will intensify its efforts to bring the army closer to young women. The focus is on creating conditions for further increasing the number of women at the command level and in peacekeeping operations. Additionally, we are currently in the final stage of adopting our second four-year action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in Montenegro. That action plan is also focused on increasing the participation of women in decision-making and peacekeeping processes, as well as on the protection of women and girls in conflict zones and the integration of gender perspectives and gender education in peacekeeping operations.

Montenegro firmly believes that women's participation and their career advancement are important for more efficient and responsible armed forces, while their participation in peacekeeping missions and operations contributes to ensuring that peace processes worldwide are comprehensive, inclusive and more effective. Our best long-term contribution to increasing women's meaningful participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations is our continuous investment in building capacities within our national armed forces in accordance with the best international standards of gender parity.

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

Mr. Rai (Nepal): At the outset, I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate to recognize the importance of women's participation in peacekeeping. I also thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their updates and valuable insights.

It has become evident that the participation of women increases the effectiveness, stability and efficiency of peace missions. Women make an inimitable contribution to peacekeeping by winning the hearts and minds of the community they are deployed to serve. They have easier access to local women, which can help reduce gender-based violence. That, in turn, helps in the protection of civilians in general. Additionally, women in peacekeeping provide direct positive motivation to the local community to embrace women's empowerment, girls' education

and gender equality. Studies have shown that female peacekeepers are highly effective in de-escalating local tensions and building trust with the local communities. Needless to say, women's participation helps prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse. All those positive ramifications eventually help in the effective implementation of a mission's mandate. Therefore, we must ensure women's active involvement in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes.

I wish to share my country's experiences. Through its own experience of the successful home-grown peace process, Nepal underscores that women's increased role in the national context greatly complements the United Nations aspiration for a greater role for women at the global level. In 2011, Nepal adopted its first five-year national action plan to implement resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). Nepal was the first country in South Asia, and the second in Asia overall, to establish such a plan. As of now, the second national plan has been drafted and builds on the experience and lessons learned from the first phase of implementation. Necessary legal arrangements have been made to encourage the recruitment of women in Nepal's security forces. Moreover, 33 per cent of positions under the reserved quota are allotted for women in all public-sector jobs. Nepal is committed to ensuring women's participation in peacekeeping. We have already met United Nations targets in terms of the participation of female peacekeepers as staff officers, military observers and individual police officers. My country also began integrating female engagement teams made up of from 30 to 35 female peacekeepers in infantry battalions 2017. Currently, Nepal is the fourth-largest contributor of female peacekeepers. Let me also reiterate Nepal's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

I would like to make the following points to enhance the participation of women in peacekeeping. Troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs) should be supported in terms of their capacity-building, with special emphasis on the deployment of female peacekeepers. In that regard, I acknowledge the efforts of Canada and the United Nations through the Elsie Initiative. I encourage Member States to support it or initiate similar funds to support TCCs and PCCs. Nepal also welcomes Germany's announcement that it will establish a female peacekeepers network. Secondly, the safety, security and dignity of female peacekeepers should be adequately ensured. Thirdly, there should be an encouraging working environment and shorter

deployment periods for female peacekeepers. Lastly, meaningful partnership with civil society and regional organizations and local communities should be ensured to incorporate gender perspectives in peace operations.

In conclusion, I would like pay tribute to those brave women who work day and night in peace missions to make this world a safer and better place.

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

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We extend our appreciation to the German presidency for organizing this important debate and prioritizing the role of women in conflict situations, including their protection and empowerment. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his Action for Peacekeeping initiative, with women in peacekeeping as one of its pillars, and also the gender-equality implementation schemes he has introduced in the structures of the Organization.

Ethiopia co-hosted, together with Canada, the 2019 Peacekeeping Ministerial preparatory meeting on women and peace and security in Addis Ababa on 28 and 29 January. We trust that the meeting contributed to drawing the attention of defence ministers from around the world and other heads of delegation who underlined the need to execute concrete measures in the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda.

We remain committed to the women and peace and security agenda, which is one of the eight priorities identified under the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. As the co-Chair of the Group of Friends on Action for Peacekeeping and a major troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Ethiopia is supporting efforts towards the implementation of that initiative.

We firmly believe that the full and effective participation of women is essential to peacekeeping performance. That has been proved in the performance of the more than 800 Ethiopian women peacekeepers currently deployed in various United Nations missions, as well as the African Union Mission in Somalia. Though Ethiopia is a leading contributor of female peacekeepers, we recognize that a lot remains to be done. In that context, I wish to reaffirm our commitment to continuing to enhance women's participation in the military, police and civilian components, including in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We absolutely agree with the vision that underscores the fact that long-term peace and stability will be achieved where the international community is able to make sure that women enjoy equal opportunities in their participation, including in decision-making processes. That is the reason why Ethiopia is working for gender parity in our uniformed personnel, which aligns with the United Nations gender parity strategy in peace operations, which sets a target of 15 per cent for women among contingent troops, as well as a goal of 20 per cent for women in formed police units by 2028.

The progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations since the adoption of landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and succeeding United Nations resolutions on the effective participation of women at all levels across conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes must be reinvigorated by all States Members of the United Nations. Structural barriers that marginalize women and hinder their effective participation, including legal and cultural obstacles, must be resolved expeditiously.

It is evident that the growing risk of violence and threats to the physical safety of women and their exposure to sexual abuse in conflict situations should be addressed with utmost urgency and priority. We strongly believe that mainstreaming the women and peace and security agenda requires effective coordination and consistent engagement among relevant stakeholders in regional and subregional organizations, as well as States, development agencies, women's interest groups and peace and security partners within the framework of the women and peace and security agenda. Accordingly, cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations is instrumental in integrating a regional approach into the women and peace and security commitments.

Let me conclude by highlighting the importance of appreciating and supporting initiatives of the African Union Peace and Security Council geared towards the implementation of the Continental Results Framework for Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa.

The President: I want to direct the attention of the representative of Ethiopia to the fact that, on 23 April, sexual violence in conflict will be on the Council's agenda, since he mentioned it in his intervention.

I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Mr. Amayo (Kenya): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate, and take note with appreciation of the comprehensive concept note (S/2019/293, annex) that you circulated to guide today's debate. I also thank Major General Kristin Lund, the first female Force Commander and current Head of Mission and Chief of Staff at the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, and Ms. Lorna Nanjia Merekaje, Secretary General of South Sudan Democratic Engagement Monitoring and Observation Programme, for their briefings.

A general consensus exists that women enhance the ability of peacekeepers to reach and interact with local communities in a peacekeeping mission. That is particularly so for local women affected by conflict, who presumably find it easier to share their challenges with fellow women and in the process reduce cases of violence. However, beyond the question of gender, many other challenges still exist to their deployment and effectiveness. The ability of women peacekeepers to make a difference in the peace and security arena is sometimes limited by, among other things, their numbers, the lack of training on specific gender-related challenges facing local women in the missions, language and, at times, an inadequate understanding of the local culture and its social and cultural barriers.

The sheer lack of sufficient numbers of female soldiers in the rank and file of most militaries is perhaps one of the greatest challenges to the participation of women in peacekeeping. A country can deploy women to peace support operations only if they are available within the establishment. That is further complicated by the length of time of deployment, bearing in mind the family responsibilities they also shoulder.

Equally, the success of women peacekeepers in enhancing the effectiveness of peacekeeping is context-specific and varies from one mission to another. Women peacekeepers have proved to be more effective in missions where they are familiar with the specific gender-related challenges affecting local women and children, including where the locals can resonate with them in terms of culture, race, language and, at times, colour. Where female peacekeepers are able to speak the local language, they are more likely to understand the specific challenges facing local women, which is an ingredient vital to the mission's success. For example, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Swahili speakers have proved to be more effective in enhancing the interaction between local women and peacekeepers,

thereby improving situational awareness and further influencing the local women by acting as role models.

Similarly, cultural sensitivities in the local communities may affect the deployment of women peacekeepers in certain areas. That is particularly so in communities that still view the profession of arms as a preserve of men. My delegation therefore recommends for consideration the following measures to address the challenges that were already mentioned.

First, Governments of Member States should be encouraged to fast-track gender mainstreaming in their national security organizations in order to create a pool from which female peacekeepers can be drawn.

Secondly, mission-specific training on gender-related issues is critical to enhancing the readiness and effectiveness of female peacekeepers. That will help in developing a better understanding of the social and cultural setting of the community and hence improve performance and final outcomes.

Thirdly, certain considerations ought to be made before a decision is taken on the deployment of women peacekeepers. For instance, shorter deployment periods should be considered for female peacekeepers who find it hard to be away for lengthy periods. Additionally, when deploying female peacekeepers, we should be sensitive to cultural variations in different missions.

Fourthly, I am happy to report that Kenya's deployment of women in peacekeeping operations now stands at 19 per cent, thereby surpassing the United Nations recommended percentage of 15 per cent across all United Nations peacekeeping operations. As a country, we shall continue to deploy more women peacekeepers, as necessary.

Finally, I wish to reaffirm our delegation's commitment to and support for the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

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

Mr. Barro (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate your country, Germany, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month and to welcome today's open debate on the issue of the participation of women in peacekeeping operations. This is a collective

undertaking that remains dependent on the mobilization of all actors.

I would also like to acknowledge the high-quality briefings delivered earlier by Secretary-General António Guterres; Major General Kristin Lund, Head of Mission and Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization; and Ms. Lorna Nanjia Merekaje, Secretary General of South Sudan Democratic Engagement Monitoring and Observation Programme.

In adopting resolution 1325 (2000) two decades ago, which still serves as our compass on the gender dimension in peacekeeping, the United Nations fully recognized the importance of women's participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution and in peacebuilding. Although some very encouraging progress has been made, the fact remains that the objectives set are far from being achieved. Women's participation in peace operations remains relatively low, accounting for only 5 per cent of military contingents, 8 per cent of formed police units and 28 per cent of civilian components.

Indeed, one of the essential objectives of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and its subsequent Declaration of Shared Commitments, endorsed by 151 Member States and four international organizations, is to increase the number of women in areas of operations, at both the strategic and operational levels. In that regard, the Secretary-General's uniformed gender parity strategy is undoubtedly another step in the right direction. However, its success depends on the full involvement of Member States. We therefore need to promote ongoing dialogue among the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries, whose gender policies have made progress that is — it must be said — rather inconsistent. Such an approach would enable the Organization to continue to support those countries, while setting realistic and achievable objectives for promoting gender equality. Factors related to the low number of women entering national defence and security forces in recent times must be taken into account, including those that do not allow some countries to increase the number of women in their contribution to peacekeeping operations in any quantitative or even qualitative way.

In Senegal, for example, the integration of women into the defence and security forces is relatively recent. In addition, it would be right to offer incentives, such as reducing the length of deployment of female staff, removing material obstacles to their recruitment and

retention and taking their specific needs into account in the establishment of infrastructure and services dedicated to operations. The same applies to the possibility of considering financial incentives for those concerned and the need to combat sexual abuse and exploitation. For its part, Senegal, which has endorsed the Circle of Leadership declaration on the prevention of that scourge, fully endorses the zero-tolerance policy and remains convinced that increasing the number of women in peacekeeping operations leads to better care for victims.

The Government of Senegal has put in place a national policy for the integration of women into its defence and security forces. The policy is based on an attractive framework, underpinned by awareness-raising campaigns that highlight the value of women in uniform, to help break down certain sociocultural barriers. The appointment of a female commissioner to helm the national police force in 2013 sent a strong message in that regard.

In addition, the 2012-2022 sector strategy on gender, adopted in 2010, aims to reach the goal of 10 per cent of women in the armed forces by creating conditions conducive to the integration, advancement and socio-professional development of women. To implement that strategy, Senegal signed a memorandum of understanding with the Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development of the non-governmental organization Femme Africa Solidarité, in particular to address the gender dimension in training, especially in predeployment training. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of women in Senegal's defence and security forces and, consequently, in its contributions to peacekeeping operations, where the number of women doubled between 2018 and 2019, in the spirit of resolution 2242 (2015). The prospects are even more promising with the support of partners, such as the UN-Women all-female selection assistance and assessment team training programme, funded by the United States and Canadian Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, among others.

In conclusion, as a major contributor of uniformed personnel, Senegal reaffirms its commitment to the Secretariat in its gender equality policy within peacekeeping operations. I remind members that the success of that policy depends on adopting an inclusive approach that takes into account the situation in Member States.

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

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Ecuador in today's timely open debate, which you, Mr. President, have convened on the issue of participation of women in peacekeeping.

The Secretary-General, the Council and the representatives of individual Members themselves have addressed, on several occasions, the relevance and importance of women's equal participation in peacekeeping operations and their invaluable contribution to the promotion of peace and security. Ecuador has a sound legal framework that guarantees the validity, exercise and enforceability of women's rights, which is based on two fundamental pillars: the Constitution, which includes explicit references to gender equality, and binding international instruments ratified by Ecuador. Ecuador actively seeks the participation of women in the armed forces and police observation missions and has made a political commitment to maintaining their presence and increasing their number. Furthermore, we have included the gender perspective throughout our development plan, which recognizes the equal participation of women and men in public and private spheres.

Ecuador is committed to the political and economic empowerment of women and their active and significant participation in the quest for peace. In that regard, we strive for equality among women and men at all levels of education at the national level, and we have implemented an integrated health care model that includes the gender perspective in developing public policies.

Ecuador is also firmly committed to facilitating decent work and women's access to decision-making processes. The Government programmes to reduce underemployment and unemployment encourage both women's participation in the labour market and narrowing the wage differential. Moreover, the Republic's organic law on elections and political organizations calls for equal participation in decision-making processes and at all levels of power.

The Constitution of the Republic establishes that Ecuador is a constitutional State of rights that will adopt affirmative actions to promote genuine equality for rights holders who face a situation of inequality, and provides for priority protection in public and private arenas for victims of sexual violence. It is a Constitution

that recognizes the right of people to live free from all forms of violence.

In that regard, Ecuador has a national plan for the eradication of gender violence, which was established as a public policy in 2007. Ecuador is currently undertaking a major national crusade to eradicate discrimination and violence against women. In that context, we highlight our comprehensive organic law to prevent and eradicate violence against women, which entered into force in February 2018. That is an important development at the national level in that area and ensures the involvement of women in working for its implementation.

Furthermore, the Constitution also determines that the armed forces are an institution for the protection of the rights, freedoms and guarantees of citizens. The Ministry of National Defence incorporates the concept of defence as a public good and, in that context, the gender approach is included in its defence policy agenda. Human rights are also considered as an area of action in spearheading defence policy and include the promotion of policies for gender equality and practices for peaceful coexistence and respect for the cultural identity of its members, as well as the effective implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1889 (2009). The inclusion of women in the armed forces has increased since 2009, when female military officers accounted for 1.1 per cent of the total number of troops. By 2012, that figure doubled and this year stands at 3.5 per cent. At the multilateral and peacekeeping levels, the role of Ecuadorian women has also increased, as demonstrated by the contribution made by women officers as observers in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

In conclusion, we welcome these spaces for discussing the political and economic empowerment of women and their meaningful and active participation in pursuit of peace. We also express our sincere desire to join efforts towards a productive and successful dialogue that promotes gender equality and the advancement of women in all areas. These are essential elements in honouring the commitment to leave no one behind.

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

Mr. Escalante (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by aligning myself with the statement made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and

Security. Like others, I thank the German presidency for convening this open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General, Major General Lund, Head of Mission, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, and Ms. Merekaje, Secretary General of South Sudan Democratic Engagement Monitoring and Observation Programme, for their briefings.

As we have all said today, women play a fundamental role in peacekeeping operations. Their inclusion strengthens the defence of human rights and leads to better results in peace negotiations. They bring different perspectives and priorities to prevention, resolution and peacebuilding processes. Practice has shown that when women participate in peace talks, they broaden the debate beyond the interests of the parties to the conflict and advocate for a more equitable peace. Unfortunately, women continue to be excluded from conflict prevention, management and resolution.

The women in peacekeeping agenda, in addition to increasing their active participation in such processes, should promote full respect for the human rights of women and girls, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, gender equity and the integration of gender perspectives into all its activities.

El Salvador is committed to peacekeeping operations and currently almost 9 per cent of the total number of its armed forces and national civil police officers serving in the seven peace missions in which we participate are women. That is a relatively small number in comparison to other contributors but it is significant in the context of my country and has been increasing in recent years. The Salvadoran women carry out different tasks at various levels, such as expert helicopter pilots and crews, for example, in our contingent in Mali, institutional-building work in Haiti, health activities through specialized doctors or the recent deployment of our first military observer in the mission in South Sudan.

Nevertheless, we note that we must continue to make progress at the national level to meet the percentage established by the United Nations in terms of women's participation in peace operations, not only because the United Nations requires it but also because we are convinced that it is right. We therefore welcome the creation of different mechanisms to continue to increase the participation of Salvadoran women in peacekeeping operations.

In that regard, we welcome the Canadian Government's innovative Elsie Initiative on Women for Peace Operations to step up our efforts for women's active participation, including by encouraging more deployments in more flexible formats.

Despite the insistence and the various efforts made to reach the minimum of 15 per cent of female troops, the likelihood of a decrease in the coming years is quite high, as the Secretary-General points out in his report of October 2018 (S/2018/900).

My country believes it important to deepen the analysis of this issue and to re-evaluate the approach guiding our efforts. Particularly in my country, there are various challenges to increasing women's participation, such as cultural, economic and family issues. Many women police or military officers are also mothers, wives, widows or carers for the elderly.

While, for structural reasons, men can strike a balance between participation in peacekeeping operations and family life, we must find ways in which women can do the same. Addressing women's different perceptions, specific situations, experiences and capacities will help to recognize the real obstacles to their participation and, as far as possible, overcome them.

For its part, El Salvador will continue to promote gender-sensitive structures that foster national capacities, including empowering women to access increasingly higher ranks within our armed forces, as well as in the various multilateral forums in which we participate, in order to have better guidance in that regard and, ultimately, better gender parity.

Finally, we would like to highlight our support for the Secretary-General's gender parity strategy, which we believe to be essential not only to comply with quotas for women's participation but also to focus on seeing women assume different levels of command in peacekeeping operations.

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

Ms. Bird (Australia): Gender parity in peace operations has vast potential to improve effectiveness, capability and credibility. We have made pledges to do better and set targets to go higher. But the number of uniformed women in the field remains extremely low and, frankly speaking, the rate of change has been

glacial. That failing is undermining United Nations efforts to fulfil mandates and sustain peace.

Women make up half the world's population, suffer disproportionately and differently in conflict, and have in-depth knowledge of local context and community needs. Yet women only make up 4 per cent of military and 10 per cent of police personnel in United Nations operations. That is compromising our engagement with local communities, limiting our situational awareness and inhibiting the protection reach of peacekeeping missions.

Australia welcomes the Secretary-General's firm commitment to gender equality, supported by the uniformed gender parity strategy. We support the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, which aims to accelerate the pace of change and enhance the deployment of women as peacekeepers. The appointment of women into senior leadership positions is crucial yet continues to face the greatest barriers. In January, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus became the first-ever peacekeeping mission to be led by a female Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Force Commander and Senior Police Adviser. Australia was proud to be a part of that milestone, but to take 70 years to achieve it is far too long.

We must acknowledge that a major reason why so few women are deployed to United Nations peace operations is because women are underrepresented in security forces across the world. Increasing the number of women relies on Member States putting initiatives in place to support the recruitment, retention, promotion and deployment of women within their security forces. This is not just about numbers, but also about cultural and organizational change. This includes removing gender restrictions on all occupations, increasing flexible employment options and reducing gender stereotyping and sexual harassment.

Australia is committed to the full inclusion of women in our defence and police forces and to mainstreaming a gender perspective across operations. The same applies to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Australia has translated this commitment at the United Nations by achieving and exceeding the uniformed women targets. We have provided gender advisers to United Nations missions and stress the importance of adequately resourcing these positions in all missions. We also fund the participation of female

peacekeepers at United Nations training courses to increase the numbers, qualifications and readiness of women for a peacekeeping deployment.

Finally, evidence shows that women and men serve better together. United Nations peace operations exist to support the most vulnerable people in the most difficult conditions. They require and deserve the most capable and effective missions we can provide. This can be done only if we draw on the full human resources at our disposal and implement a gender perspective in all operations. In this, the United Nations must lead by example.

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

Mr. Saleh Azzam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. I wish you and the delegation of Germany every success. My country's delegation also thanks you for having chosen such an important topic for this open debate, namely, women in peacekeeping operations. I would like as well to thank the briefers for their informative briefings.

Several days ago, we had a ministerial meeting in the General Assembly Hall on peacekeeping operations, with high-level participation from countries all over the world. The topic of and level of participation in that conference reflected the conviction of the international community that peacekeeping operations play a central role in the maintenance of international peace and security. It sent a message of support and appreciation to the contributing countries and the peacekeeping operations for their achievements.

There is consensus on the decisive role of peacekeeping operations in reducing tensions and defusing conflicts. Within that framework, the Action for Peacekeeping initiative of the Secretary-General provides the international community with an updated and comprehensive roadmap to strengthen and rationalize those operations, and make them better capable of carrying out their mandate. That is why Lebanon was first among the countries to support the initiative. We are convinced that, with its content, objectives and capacity, it can make a qualitative change concerning the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations.

The women and peace and security agenda, as enshrined in resolution 1325 (2000), is among the top priorities of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. The agenda reflects the acknowledgement of the international community of the need to integrate the gender perspective into peacekeeping operations as an indispensable condition for strengthening and enhancing them.

Until recently, women made up no more than 4 per cent of the military component of peacekeeping operations around the world, 10 per cent of the police component and 28 per cent of civilian personnel. Those figures illustrate the considerable gap that exists when it comes to the representation of women, which requires a major effort to bridge. Working towards gender parity in peacekeeping would be a victory for the inalienable right to representation for half of human society — women — and enable them to carry out their duties and responsibilities to strengthen international peace and security. That is an indisputable issue of principle. Furthermore, it is not a question of simply attempting to correct an imbalance of rights; it is also a need for peacekeeping operations as such. Strengthening the role of women within peacekeeping operations would enhance those operations and thereby promote peace.

Indeed, women bring comparative advantages to peacekeeping operations that improve their performance. Their presence allows for the empowering of local women and helps to improve and deepen the relationship between local communities and peacekeeping personnel.

As Council members know, Lebanon hosts one of the largest United Nations peacekeeping operations, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). For four decades, UNIFIL has played a major role in maintaining stability along the southern border of Lebanon, thereby helping to maintain stability in the country and the region. Lebanon highly appreciates the efforts and sacrifices made by UNIFIL, its commanders and staff, and we thank the contributing countries for their long-term commitment to supporting UNIFIL.

In the context of the topic of today's meeting, my country's delegation pays homage to the women working in UNIFIL. By late February, the rate of women's participation in UNIFIL had increased to 5.25 per cent. Although we must recognize that positive achievement, the current rate remains well below

what we had hoped for. Greater participation must be encouraged, as appropriate.

In November 2015, UNIFIL created a female assessment and analysis support team tasked with various activities, including operational and communication activities with the local people. Since the establishment of the team, we have noticed an increase in the number of social activities involving women and children within UNIFIL area of operation.

On 13 March, Sector West of UNIFIL hosted a workshop for the women of the Lebanese army and of UNIFIL to exchange experiences. That event, the first of its kind, was part of efforts to strengthen cooperation and partnership between the Lebanese army and the United Nations Force and to increase joint activities related to the gender dimension and civilian/military cooperation. We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for having spoken at the workshop during his most recent visit to Lebanon.

I would like to conclude by stressing that correcting the gender imbalance in peacekeeping operations is tantamount to strengthening the peacekeeping mechanism. That is a long-term investment in building and sustaining peace. I hope that the outcome of today's meeting will be a unified, simple and direct outcome: more women, more peace.

The President: Taking into consideration that Germany is also part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), I take the statement made by the representative of Lebanon as having been directed towards us as well. There should be more women in UNIFIL.

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Gad (Egypt): Let me start by thanking Germany for convening this important open debate in the Security Council today, and the Secretary-General and all the briefers for their useful and informative presentations today.

Moreover, my delegation supports the two statements that were delivered on behalf of the African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement today.

At the outset, I would like to highlight the role of the Cairo Roadmap for Enhancing the Performance of Peacekeeping Operations from Mandate to Exit on the international issue of women and peacekeeping, and especially the fact that the Roadmap is partially

based on the outcome of the Cairo High-level Regional Conference on Enhancing the Performance of Peacekeeping Operations: From Mandate to Exit, organized by the Government of Egypt and the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding in November 2018.

That Roadmap also draws upon outcomes of other key policy documents of the United Nations, most notably the three strategic reviews of 2015 and Security Council presidential statement S/PRST/2017/27, of December 2017. The final version of the Cairo Roadmap has also benefited from comments received during extensive consultations with other Member States, the Secretariat and leading practitioners and subject-matter experts, including during three events organized in New York in December 2018 and February and March 2019.

The Roadmap aims to advance ongoing reform efforts by presenting concrete and actionable recommendations for the implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. They take into consideration the primary objective of the initiative with a view to enhancing the performance and, consequently, the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping.

With regard to women's participation in peacekeeping operations, last month Egypt pledged to reach 10 per cent of women in each deployed formed police unit in all United Nations peacekeeping operations. Ten women have been already included in every deployed formed police unit. Likewise, the Cairo Roadmap highlights the need for the international community to guarantee that the Secretariat will consider commissioning a study on the trends and factors affecting women's full and meaningful participation in peacekeeping missions to enable effective and sustainable reforms.

Furthermore, we believe that it is important, in that regard, that Member States and the Secretariat consider targeted training support for women serving in uniformed components and encourage innovative

partnership arrangements, such as the Elsie Initiative on Women in Peace Operations, to reach the targets set by the United Nations for women's participation at 15 per cent in military positions and 20 per cent among police deployments.

It is necessary that Member States and the Secretariat adopt concrete strategies beyond targets and incentives to support the increased deployment of uniformed women in military and police roles, including leadership positions, while placing greater emphasis on women's contributions to capability and operational effectiveness, thereby ensuring the deployment of trained and qualified women peacekeepers.

Likewise, Member States and the Secretariat are invited to advance the implementation of the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, with its victim-centred approach, and jointly assess the effectiveness of the measures undertaken thus far in eradicating sexual exploitation and abuse crimes in peacekeeping operations. Moreover, the Secretariat is invited to incorporate that assessment into the upcoming report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, pursuant to its resolution 71/278, of 10 March 2017.

Once again, we thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting today, and we look forward to further discussions on this important matter.

The President: I would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations for their contributions to this open debate. We have heard from 63 speakers, including three briefers, in roughly six hours, which I think is not bad. I therefore also thank everybody for their discipline.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.