



# Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

**8886**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Thursday, 21 October 2021, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Ms. Omamo/Mr. Kiboino . . . . .	(Kenya)
 <i>Members:</i>		
	China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
	Estonia . . . . .	Mr. Jürgenson
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	India . . . . .	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Brophy
	Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Niger . . . . .	Mr. Abarry
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Kuzmin
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Ms. King
	Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Lord Ahmad
	United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Dang

## Agenda

### Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2021/827)

Letter dated 13 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/875)

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In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of Security Council members dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this official record of the Security Council will be supplemented by a compilation of annexes (S/2021/886) containing the statements submitted by interested non-members of the Council.



*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Women and peace and security**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2021/827)**

#### **Letter dated 13 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/875)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Bineta Diop, African Union Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security; and Ms. Celia Umenza Velasco, Legal Coordinator for the Indigenous Reservation of Tacueyo and member of the Association of Indigenous Cabildos of the North of Cauca.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite Her Excellency Ms. Stella Ronner-Grubačić, Ambassador for Gender and Diversity, European External Action Service, to participate in this meeting.

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/2021/827, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security, and document S/2021/875, which contains the text of a letter dated 13 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary General and the Ministers and other high-level representatives. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

I now give the floor His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres.

**The Secretary-General:** We just came from the exhibition you mentioned before the start of the meeting, Madam President. Indeed, we saw true women heroes. I think their struggle, commitment and courage is an inspiration for us all. I would say that nothing could better start off our debate than the testimony of this group of women heroes.

Seen through the lenses of talented women photographers, the exhibition — *In Their Hands: Women Taking Ownership of Peace* — vividly brings to life the inspiring stories of women around the world who are dedicating their lives to the most important and consequential cause of all, peace. From the safety of this Chamber, we discuss and debate pathways of peace for countries around the world. But the women portrayed in the exhibition are on the front lines of the fight for peace. They are peacebuilders, change-makers and activists, defenders of human rights, decision-makers and leaders. They are mediating and negotiating with armed groups, implementing peace agreements and pushing for peaceful transitions. And they are fighting for women's rights and social cohesion in their communities.

Yet, too often, women remain on the periphery of formal peace processes and are largely excluded from rooms where decisions are made. Today women's leadership is a cause; tomorrow it must be the norm. We can no longer exclude one half of humankind from international peace and security.

*(spoke in French)*

As I said to the General Assembly last month (see A/76/PV.3), the time has come for truth. We face the biggest avalanche of crises in generations. Our world is moving backwards, and more and more rapidly. Military coups are coming back. Power-grabbing is with us again. A new arms race is being launched, and the nuclear threat is at its highest level in almost 40 years. As a percentage of gross domestic product, military spending last year saw the biggest annual increase since 2009. It now stands at around \$2 trillion per year,

tying up funds that could be spent on development at a time they are needed the most.

Those are not separate issues. Conflict prevention and disarmament are precisely at the heart of the movements for peace led by women for more than a century. And, as this year's report illustrates (S/2021/827), there is a direct link between increased investment in weapons and increased insecurity and inequalities affecting women.

*(spoke in English)*

The power imbalance between men and women remains the most stubborn and persistent of all inequalities. It finds expression in many ways: in the rising rates of violence and misogyny that women and girls face in every society; in the extreme underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions; and certainly in the myriad challenges faced by women in situations of conflict. In every humanitarian emergency, the clock on women's rights has not stopped; it is moving backwards.

In Myanmar, where women have long been a force for peace — including in the civil disobedience movement — a number of women's organizations have had to close their operations due to security reasons after the military coup. Many are now continuing their efforts underground. In Ethiopia, we hear chilling reports of sexual violence being used as a weapon of war — an outrage. Despite courageous efforts, Yemeni women continue to be excluded from the overall political process by the warring parties, and the latest Government failed to include a single woman minister, something unseen in 20 years. In Mali, after two coups in nine months, the space for women's rights is not just shrinking, but closing. And in Afghanistan, girls and women are seeing a rapid reversal of the rights they achieved in recent decades, including their right to a seat in the classroom.

We need to fight back and turn the clock forward for every woman and girl. That commitment is at the heart of my report *Our Common Agenda* as well as my call to action for human rights. We want to fast-track women's full and equal participation in every aspect of life. That includes across peace processes and political transitions. Women represented only 23 per cent of delegates in peace processes led or co-led by the United Nations last year. Even getting to that point required innovation, persistence and leadership. Sometimes, I would also say stubbornness.

But we are working to accelerate those gains. As we have seen in Libya and Syria, for example, measures including bold targets, inclusive principles and incentives can be a powerful way to increase women's participation in mediation and peace processes. I am committed to expanding measures like those everywhere I can.

In Colombia, women's organizations are key partners of the United Nations Verification Mission, and we are working closely with them to monitor the implementation of the peace agreement. And in Afghanistan, the United Nations is staying and delivering and will continue to promote and defend the rights of women and girls in all our engagements with the de facto Taliban authorities. We will not stop until girls can go back to school and women can return to their jobs and participate in public life.

As part of our Action for Peacekeeping Initiative, we are also investing in partnerships with local women leaders and peacebuilders and increasing the number of women across our peacekeeping operations. Since January 2018, the percentage of women staff officers and military experts has risen from 8 per cent to nearly 18 per cent today, and from 20 to 30 per cent among individual police officers. We also have more women leading our field missions than ever before; we now have parity among our heads or deputy heads of missions.

And we are not stopping there. Increasing women's representation and leadership across every aspect of the United Nations peace activities is critical to improving the delivery of our mandate and better representing the communities we serve.

But we need the Council's support in three ways: partnerships, protection and participation.

First, the Council must support our work to strengthen and deepen our partnerships with local women leaders and their networks, in line with my call to action on women transforming peace and security. They need to be able to meaningfully engage in peace and political processes.

Secondly, the Council should help us protect women human rights defenders and activists. The heroes captured in the photo exhibit are risking their lives to build peace in their communities. They deserve protection as they carry out this essential work.

And thirdly, the Council must work with us to promote women's full, equal and meaningful

participation in peace talks, peacebuilding and political systems as countries transition to peace. We need full gender parity — including through the establishment of ambitious quotas — across elections, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and justice systems.

We know it can be done. Last month, the Deputy Secretary-General travelled to Somalia to support the 30 per cent quota for women in the upcoming elections there. Upon her return, she was met with expressions of support from Council members. The time has come to transform these words of support into action, not just in Somalia but across all countries under discussion in the Council.

Women will no longer accept reversals of their rights. They should not have to — in countries in conflict or anywhere else. For our part, the United Nations will double down on truly inclusive peacemaking and put women's participation and rights at the centre of everything we do, everywhere we do it.

The best way to build peace is through inclusion, and the best way to honour the inspiring commitment and bravery of women peacemakers is to open doors to their meaningful participation. Let us turn the clock forward on women's rights and give half of humankind the opportunity to build the peace we all seek.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Bahous.

**Ms. Bahous:** It is an honour to address the Security Council to present the Secretary-General's report on women and peace and security (S/2021/827). In these dark days of multiple crises, this topic is more important than ever. As I start my tenure as Executive Director of UN-Women, I look forward to working with the Council to strengthen and accelerate the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

It has been 21 years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) in this very Chamber. Yet we still meet to discuss the limited progress made. The doors that resolution 1325 (2000) was meant to burst open have let in only a glimmer of light. But as women, as peacebuilders, as development practitioners, we take that glimmer and we fight.

As the Secretary-General has said, the United Nations intends to push back, double down, and

move forward. His report before the Council today is rich in evidence. Let me focus on two of the most salient lessons from those findings. First, we need to significantly increase funding for the women and peace and security agenda and, conversely, curb military spending. Secondly, we need to do more to support women's meaningful participation in peace and security processes.

On the need to curb military spending, if we want to see a paradigm shift in the way we confront peace and security issues, we need to take a hard look at the levels and trajectory of global military spending. Curbing military spending has been a chief strategic objective of the women's movement for peace. It was a key objective of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995; it was reaffirmed recently during the Generation Equality Forum; and it is essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16. The evidence clearly shows that high levels of military spending in post-conflict settings increase the risk of renewed conflict. It also shows that investing in gender equality has a high return in peace dividends.

Yet we continue to overspend in the former and underinvest in the latter. Last year, global military expenditure increased by 2.6 per cent, even in the face of the contraction in the global economy of 3.3 per cent and the competing demands of the coronavirus disease. That is nearly \$2 trillion spent in the same year when all economies, whether in peace or conflict, struggled to meet people's basic needs.

In stark contrast, in humanitarian appeals, sectors that addressed gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health services are funded at only 33 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively, compared to an average funding of 61 per cent for the overall appeal. None of the ceasefire agreements reached between 2018 and 2020 included the prohibition of sexual violence, and the percentage of peace agreements with gender provisions stands at 28.6 per cent.

At this critical juncture, we have to review prioritization. Thriving nations are equal nations, and equal nations are more peaceful nations. But people cannot thrive without investment in their basic needs, such as health care and social protection. Conflict-affected countries spend two to three times more on defence than they do on health care. The opposite is true in most stable countries. When State support is

absent or inadequate, women rely even more on their local organizations.

Yet the share of bilateral aid supporting feminist, women-led and women's rights organizations and movements in fragile or conflict-affected countries is a mere 0.4 per cent. Furthermore, there has been a striking increase in the fragility of funding for these organizations. More than 80 per cent of local civil society organizations working on the front lines of crises reported this year that their organization's existence was at risk due to lack of funding, up from the 30 per cent reported last year.

There is no better predictor of our ability to advance gender equality or reduce violence against women the strength of the women's movement. We cannot expect women's organizations to perform miracles if they do not have enough funds to keep their lights on and if their leaders are under constant threat. There is an urgent need to accelerate both programmatic and institutional financing.

One pathway to shift the spending paradigms is to increase the number of women in elected and appointed posts. I ask the international community to do more to support the participation of women in decision-making on defence and security sector expenditures, to expand the use of gender-budgeting tools and programming to influence military spending levels, and to strengthen citizens' oversight of military budgeting through enhanced transparency and accountability.

My second request builds on the Secretary-General's call for partnerships, protection and participation, which is also a central part of our common agenda and a renewed social contract. Women's equal and meaningful participation in peace and security is the central goal of resolution 1325 (2000), yet we continue to fall short.

Quotas and other special measures are our best mechanisms to accelerate positive change to increase representation. The report shows us that women's parliamentary representation in conflict and post-conflict countries doubles where there are legislated quotas. The United Nations is committed to promoting the use of quotas, not just in politics but in peace processes and other relevant contexts.

Other recommended approaches include inclusive selection measures, independent delegations of women representatives, political commitment by Member

States for processes they support, and investment in better data collection, gender analysis and monitoring of results across all peace efforts.

It is clear that women's participation and their protection are linked. We simply cannot have one without the other. We cannot expect women to build peace if their lives are constantly under threat. The report provides examples of the violence committed against women and girls in conflict settings and refugee camps, much of it conducted with almost complete impunity. This includes instances of targeted violence against women in public life who are fighting for peace or for their rights.

In Colombia, 10 of the 16 members of the Special Forum on Gender, which monitors the implementation of the gender provisions of the peace agreement, reported threats made directly against them, as did women who participated in the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in 2020. The rapid takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban was preceded by a wave of killings of women civil society activists and journalists and the targeting of academics, vaccinators and women judges.

This is happening in other countries too. In 2020, the United Nations verified 35 cases of killings of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists, but this number is a significant undercount and comes from only seven conflict-affected countries with data.

We are falling short of providing protection to these women, even those who risk their lives to collaborate with the United Nations. This ranges from properly assessing the risks and monitoring threats to planning for contingencies, making rapid and flexible funding available for individual cases, ensuring that women are part of delivering and planning humanitarian aid and taking all necessary measures to enhance digital and physical security.

The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which has already supported more than 400 women's organizations since 2016, is working on opening a special window for such cases. This could help to pay for evacuation and resettlement costs, counselling and mental health-care services and necessary equipment, from computer software to security cameras.

In this context, again, we need Governments to step up. We rely on Governments to open doors for these women and facilitate and expedite the approval

of applications for asylum, temporary relocation or protected status owing to gender-based persecution. We rely on the Security Council to support the work of women's civil society organizations, condemn, investigate and punish attacks against them and review the national laws that may be constraining their civic space and curtailing their activities and funding.

When we act together, we can accomplish transformative change. From Mexico City to Paris this year, the resounding expression of political and financial support for gender equality galvanized by the Generation Equality Forum could not have come at a better time. Part of that movement to advance gender equality and all that it can bring was the new Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, whose areas of work will be directly supportive of the Secretary-General's goals.

I invite participants today to join the 153 signatories and make concrete commitments to advance our common cause over the next five years. I hope that they feel — and share — my sense of urgency to make progress in the women and peace and security agenda. If we want to see a tangible difference in the lives of women and girls and a paradigm shift in the way we confront peace and security issues, we need Governments to step up — and not just the Governments in countries that are affected by conflict, but also their regional neighbours, their trading partners, their military allies, their donors, and most of all, the Security Council.

For too long we have seen vast military spending that is in bitter contrast to the limited investment in other areas. For too long we have seen the violence targeting women and their rights and, at the same time, the extreme marginalization and exclusion of those women from the very places where they can drive change. Surely the time has come to say "enough". Surely there is hope. Today's report recommends solutions. I look forward to working with all Council members and others in supporting the implementation of those solutions.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Diop.

**Ms. Diop:** I thank Ambassador Raychelle Omamo, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya, for presiding over today's meeting. Let me also salute the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency

Mr. António Guterres, and all members of the Security Council as well as civil society representatives.

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate Kenya on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and thank you, Madam President, for convening today's open debate on the women and peace and security agenda in commemoration of the twenty-first anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000).

Twenty-one years after resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted, much progress has been made, but conflict and its impact on women and girls continues and may in fact be increasing. We have seen it most recently in Afghanistan. In the Sahel region and in such countries as Mozambique, Ethiopia and Somalia, women and girls are at heightened risk of sexual violence and in West Africa, the loss of already precarious livelihood. Several countries are undergoing transition. Will women be afforded an opportunity for their meaningful participation and representation?

The evidence is clear: women's participation in peace negotiation, peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery is not only a matter of justice and rights, but it is a direct benefit for the success and sustainability of those processes. In September of this year, the African Union Commission released the Chairperson's second report from the Continental Results Framework for Reporting on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa, which presents the status of implementation of the agenda in Africa. I would like to focus my briefing on the findings from the report that align with this year's open debate theme: "Investing in women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding", and the Secretary-General's report on women and peace and security (S/2021/827). I would speak on two pertinent issues — investing in local women peacebuilders and the implementation of national action plans.

The history of conflict and peace in Africa has many examples in which local women have played a critical role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, yet their actions have not been followed by sustained investment. I offer two examples. First, the Mano River Women's Peace Network in West Africa was recognized by the General Assembly with the United Nations Prize for Human Rights in 2003. Despite that recognition, the network has largely gone unfunded. Secondly, together with the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, my sister, Amina J. Mohammed, I have visited Mali, the Niger, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo,

South Sudan, Somalia, just to name a few. In all these countries, women peacebuilders are struggling using their limited resources to fund their initiatives.

Allow me to also underscore the need to raise our concern on women human rights defenders and peacebuilders who are at constant risk of reprisal and intimidation and are being denied their freedom of speech and expression. Nevertheless, they are key actors in driving the change we would like to see in the women and peace and security agenda. That example serves to reinforce the fact that the systematic integration and resourcing of women and their agency and their leadership role in collective peace, mediation and development efforts must be increased and prioritized. Investing in the Women's Initiative is therefore the most efficient way to counter threats and conflict.

Africa has the most robust framework for the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda. The African continent also leads in the world in the development of national action plans, amounting to 54.5 per cent of national action plans globally, as of 20 December 2020. Despite the existence of strong progressive and articulated continental policies, women and girls continue to bear the brunt of conflict on our continent. The African Union Continental Results Framework 2020 report shows that most of the women and peace and security frameworks and national action plans in Africa have not translated into national development plans and budgets and are still largely dependent on external funding for implementation.

The recommendation of the Secretary-General for the allocation of 15 per cent of all development funds to activities that seek to bring about gender equality and women's empowerment is yet to be achieved. The increase in military expenditure has come at the expense of investment in human security, with negative repercussions for women and girls, especially during the coronavirus disease pandemic. Efforts have been made to increase the number of women peacekeepers — cases in point are Kenya, Ethiopia and Senegal, just to name a few.

We welcome that. However, my recent visit to Somalia demonstrated the need to better equip women peacekeepers with the necessary tools and allow them to pursue leadership roles in field operations.

As I conclude, I wish to put forward a few recommendations for the kind consideration of the Security Council.

First is the imperative to create a flexible funding mechanism to support the women in peacebuilding initiative.

The second recommendation is ownership and coherent implementation of the development, humanitarian and peace agenda enshrined in Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Generation Equality Forum. I think that that instrument will address some of the root causes of conflict if it is implemented.

Thirdly, we must leverage the existing platforms, such as the African Women Leaders Network and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation to enhance women's participation and representation in mediation and governance mechanisms.

Fourthly, we must accelerate the gender reform of national defence and security forces to ensure women's meaningful participation, leadership and deployment to peacekeeping missions.

Finally, we welcome the Photoville travelling exhibition that will build bridges between peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions and their host communities. We hope to see the Photoville in Africa very soon.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Umenza Velasco.

**Ms. Umenza Velasco** (*spoke in Spanish*): I am Celia Umenza Velasco. I am an indigenous woman activist dedicated to my people, our territory, the environment and the cause of peace. I bring participants greetings from the spirits of the natural world.

I am honoured to address the Security Council today on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, as well as indigenous women and women in all their diversity — peasant farmers, women of African descent, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) persons, refugee and migrant women, women with disabilities and women from countries around the world who suffer from war, poverty and discrimination. On that note, I want to express my solidarity with the women and LGBTQI people of Afghanistan, who continue to risk their lives fighting for their rights and an equal place in Afghan society. We stand with them.

Colombia remains one of the world's most dangerous countries for defenders of human rights and land and territorial rights. Attacks on human rights defenders,

especially women, LGBTQI persons and peasant-farmer, Afro-descendant and indigenous leaders continue, including in response to the recent protests in Colombia against extreme inequality, violence and the limited implementation of the peace accord. On average, at least one indigenous defender is killed every week. In my territory, Cauca, three indigenous women leaders with whom I worked were killed in 2020. Their brutal murders illustrate how women often pay a terrible price for their leadership.

For an indigenous person, land means everything to us. We are nourished by it, and it is a part of our identity and our history. Indigenous communities oppose logging, mining, agribusiness and other large-scale extractive and infrastructure projects because they threaten the environment and deplete our natural resources. Many such projects are actively supported by the Government of Colombia. Indigenous defenders in Colombia are viewed as a threat because we challenge powerful economic interests. My people are killed for protecting our waterways, forests, flowers and fauna, when their courage and dedication should be held up as a model in the non-violent struggle for territorial rights.

Violence against our communities also demonstrates the devastating impact of militarized responses to social crises. The only State presence that we have in our territories are the military and the police, who often seem to protect the economic interests of the powerful sectors, not the rights of the local populations. That represents a failure to comply with the provisions of the peace accord. Furthermore, during the recent national protests, police used excessive force against peaceful demonstrators across the country, particularly in Cali, where a large percentage of the population is of African descent and where our indigenous security guards were attacked. State forces have committed sexual and gender-based violence. Peaceful protesters have been subject to torture, illegal detention, disappearances and killings, echoing the violence that has marked more than five decades of war. The gravity of that situation led to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to call for the general demilitarization of the police in Colombia.

The peace accord, with 130 provisions on gender equality and women's rights, was achieved due to the determined struggle of Colombian feminist movements. On paper, the peace accord provides the foundation for a democratic country. However, five years since its adoption, implementation is at a standstill, especially

of its gender provisions and the ethnic chapter. The Special Forum on Gender and the High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples are both underfunded and lack political support. Members of the Special Forum on Women have been threatened and attacked.

Implementation is most delayed in provisions for comprehensive rural reform, which would give women access to land and enable them to chart a path to inclusive and holistic development for their communities. Instead, we see the expansion of extractive activities that exploit natural resources, violate territorial rights, exacerbate conflict and increase violence against human rights defenders, especially those who defend their land. Colombia's peace accord may be unprecedented in its incorporation of international standards of gender equality, but what good are agreements and promises if they are not kept?

Threats faced by women peacebuilders and human rights defenders in one community are a threat to all women everywhere. Despite the adoption of 10 resolutions and the repeated affirmations of the value of civil society, the issue of women human rights defenders remains a critical gap in the Security Council's implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Colombia is no different. Although the members of the Security Council have regularly condemned the targeting of women human rights defenders and social leaders, they have not done enough to turn words into action. Ending attacks against women human rights defenders — not only in Colombia but in all conflicts on the Council's agenda — and ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all their diversity is essential for sustainable peace. I therefore urge the Security Council to call on the Colombian Government to take certain steps.

First, it must fully implement and resource the peace accord, in particular the ethnic chapter and the gender provisions.

Secondly, it must adhere to free, prior and informed consent processes with rural labourer, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities with regard to economic development in their territories and must ensure that development processes comply with international human rights law and principles and the peace accord.

Thirdly, the Government must address the crisis of violence against human rights defenders, including by ensuring adequate resources for the development of collective and territorial self-protection measures

for indigenous, rural labourer and Afro-descendant communities, as well as supporting their permanent presence in forums where protection policies are debated.

Fourthly, it must immediately demilitarize the police force and redirect funding to social investment.

Finally, it must ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women leaders in the implementation of the peace accord and in negotiations with other armed actors in Colombia.

Peace is more than the absence of war. To indigenous women, it means an end to discrimination, respect for human rights, justice, economic equality and transformative change, with human life at its centre. As the primary international organ responsible for peace and security, I urge the Security Council to not allow this open debate to become yet another occasion where the Council listens to women civil society representatives but fails to act on our concerns. The plight of Afghan women illustrates all too clearly the cost of inaction. Women around the world demonstrate daily that they have the courage and conviction to fight for peace. Today we call on the Council to fight for us all.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Umenza Velasco for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya.

I am greatly honoured to preside over the twenty-first annual open debate on women and peace and security. Kenya is delighted to open up the Chamber for the first in-person participation by the wider United Nations membership since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

I thank His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for his inspiring remarks. I also thank the Executive Director of UN-Women and our other briefers for their insightful presentations. I also welcome my fellow Ministers who have joined us for today's debate — the Ministers of the United Kingdom and Ireland — as well as Mrs. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who is here both as a Permanent Representative and as a member of President Biden's Cabinet. I thank them for joining us today.

The Security Council is designed to offer solutions. However, peace must be planted deeper and rise from the grass roots. In the words of Ms. Hawa Games

Dahad, a gender observer who recently participated in the Juba peace talks:

“[p]eace cannot be confined to meetings and speeches in conference halls; peace must be spread from the streets”.

In that sense, peacebuilding and peacekeeping are manifestations of the dignity, courage, tenacity and ambition of ordinary people.

The Security Council and United Nations agencies must continue to encourage and design peace processes that include the people, particularly women at the grass-roots level. Resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions call upon us to recognize and actively seek the participation of women in building, negotiating and keeping the peace. We must therefore endeavour to see women; we must make their work, their experiences and accomplishments visible. We must invest in them; we must walk in their pathways and on their streets in order to incorporate their ambitions and needs into national and international policies and strategies and fully comprehend their interventions in the construction and maintenance of peace.

That is why I was excited and humbled this morning to walk through the Photoville exhibition alongside the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women. I recommend the exhibition to everyone. It features women leaders, peacebuilders, mediators, peace signatories, parliamentarians, activists and youth advocates. The photographs capture the tangible outcomes we are all seeking in the implementation of the resolution 1325 (2000) and the women and peace and security agenda.

Kenya, in partnership with the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and UN-Women, will today launch the African tour of this travelling exhibition. We thank Denmark, Canada, Australia and Norway for energizing this collaboration, as well as the women photographers who brought us these stories. We also appreciate Kenya Airways for facilitating the voyage of this exhibition to the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic, and to Nairobi next year.

Women are quietly working, organizing and mobilizing for peace at the grass-roots level — in villages, camps for internally displaced persons, refugee camps and in the sprawling informal settlements that dot across our continent and in myriad locations all over

the world. They are rebuilding broken communities, forging reconciliation and agitating for their rights, even in the face of disruption and displacement, sexual and gender-based violence and the brutality of conflict itself.

The endeavour of women at the local level, at the heart of conflict zones, is often overlooked and underrated, yet sustainable peace must be owned and nurtured by communities and families in the first instance. It is therefore necessary to uplift the voices of women in the field and to bolster their contributions in conflict prevention and peacemaking. That demands investment in women across the peacebuilding and peacekeeping continuum.

In conflict-affected zones, investment in women must correspond to context and the threat environment. We ought to invest in the physical protection of women and girls from abuse and violence. We must invest in homegrown conflict management skills and the knowledge of local women. We must invest in building capacity in new mediation and negotiation competencies. We must invest in livelihoods and in women-led, small and medium-sized enterprises and new agricultural practices. We must invest in the recovery of women and children. We must invest in their peace. We must invest in their advocacy. We must utilize their agency as interlocutors in counter-violent extremism programmes, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives and climate action and adaptation interventions in conflict zones. We must bring local women from the periphery to the centre of the women and peace and security agenda. Our peace must be owned by women — local women. Kenya is committed to that investment in local women because these women are the heartbeat of our peace.

In that regard, let me highlight five action points.

The first is enhanced collaboration between local women expertise with key stakeholders and new partners to generate gender- and age-informed disaggregated data, especially with regard to addressing the causes, drivers and accelerators of conflict. Data must make women visible.

Secondly, national action plans must deliberately take into account the contribution and participation of women at the grass-roots level and provide budget lines, support and targeted programmes to amplify their voices and build capacity and resilience.

Thirdly, a key role of women peacekeepers must be the protection of women and children in conflict zones. In that regard, women peacekeepers must acquire new skills and competencies. From our experience in Somalia, we have identified women as key drivers of peace. We are beginning to train them in counter-improvised explosive devices skills at our Humanitarian Peace Support School in Embakasi, where we also offer training in engineering, within the triangular partnership programme, in association with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

Fourthly, investment in meaningful partnerships between local women and women peacekeeping mission personnel is critical. For instance, the Kenya Defence Forces deployed an all-women platoon to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to protect women in that conflict zone. Furthermore, the agency of local women in early warning and prevention should be better utilized and incorporated into national, regional and subregional early-warning mechanisms, such as FemWise-Africa.

Fifthly, peace mission support should ensure that post-conflict reconstruction and development processes involve local women in relief and recovery, security sector reform and demobilization processes. The provision of psychosocial and legal support to the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence should also involve local expertise, local women and local knowledge.

I conclude with the words of the late Thomas Sankara who said, “I hear the roar of women’s silence; I sense the rumble of their storm”. We must ensure that the roar of the women at the grass-roots level is heard, their contribution valued and their aspirations seen and fully captured in the women and peace and security agenda. For the sake of sustainable peace, let us walk with women at the grass-roots level. Let us walk on their streets and in their villages.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

I call on the Permanent Representative of the United States of America and member of President Biden’s Cabinet.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his report (S/2021/827) and his remarks.

I would like to welcome Sima Bahous, the new head of UN-Women. We look forward to working with her in the future.

I would like to thank our two briefers, who joined us today for this annual debate on women and peace and security and welcome all our guests. I would also just like to take a moment to call out Bineta Diop and thank her for her years of commitment to African women. Wherever women have faced issues, Ms. Diop has been there for more than 20 years. She has never given up on her commitment, even in the face of some of the most difficult challenges. I thank her.

I thank Kenya for convening us to fully reaffirm our women and peace and security commitments and discuss how to further support and amplify ongoing efforts by women to craft and sustain peace.

Let me start by stating our firm and unequivocal commitment to the women and peace and security agenda, as laid out in resolution 1325 (2000). By promoting women's participation and leadership in politics, education, mediation, negotiations and every aspect of public life, we promote more security and peace for all. That should not just be a priority for women; it should be a priority for everyone who values peace and progress.

For our part, the United States is proud of its tireless work to advance this landmark resolution and its tenets. The United States passed the Women, Peace and Security Act in 2017, thereby making us the first country in the world with a comprehensive domestic law promoting this key agenda. Since that time, we have made profound and tangible progress towards advancing the women and peace and security agenda, which has greatly increased the safety and security of women, girls and people around the world.

Internally, we have improved the capacity and technical expertise of our Government personnel to add a women and peace and security lens. For example, our Department of Defense has overhauled our women and peace and security training and developed additional in-house training to meet the growing needs and demands for women and peace and security instruction. Our Department of Homeland Security has trained

hundreds of personnel to integrate women and peace and security principles into their work.

Meanwhile, around the world, the United States Agency for International Development has provided critical health care, psychosocial support, legal aid and economic services to more than 13.5 million survivors of gender-based violence. Our Department of State has invested approximately \$138 million in women and peace and security assistance, thereby complementing our diplomatic and policy engagement in 60 countries.

My point is that those are not just talking points for us. They are genuine commitments, clearly codified in domestic legislation, that we are meeting as a key part of our overarching foreign policy. In June, the White House provided its first report to Congress tracking our progress on this work. The challenges it detailed are very real.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has led to spiking and extraordinary rates of gender-based violence and erased decades of progress on efforts to protect and educate girls. Many of the girls affected will never return to school if the international community chooses to neglect and forget them. We cannot allow that to happen. We need to work together to promote the women and peace and security agenda around the world because we know we make a difference. For example, women played a leading role in the Sudan's 2019 transition, and women's representation in subsequent political negotiations was crucial to maintaining peace and security. That was a moment where women took their seat at the table and pushed for resounding change in their country. Of course, the work is not done. Those women and others need to be included in transition and reconciliation efforts to ensure that there is real, sustainable peace in South Sudan.

Or let us look at Colombia, where there has been significant progress following the truly inclusive peace process, which resulted in numerous gender provisions in the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The United States continues to support efforts to monitor and advance the implementation of the peace accord there, including provisions related to the safety and empowerment of women and girls and the development of local peace councils.

Those are just two examples of tangible progress, but the world is poised to produce many, many more. That starts with the Security Council's work to prioritize

the safety, perspectives and participation of women in peacekeeping operations and special political mission mandate renewals.

Moving forward, we hope to see many more mandates promote the inclusion of women in operations, the perspectives and the needs of women and girls and other groups at risk of violence and exploitation, and the protection of human rights defenders and civil society. We will continue to call for those commitments on behalf of women and girls around the world, but the challenges remain. We must continue to demand and defend the rights of Afghan women and girls. We must stand up against violence and the targeting of women in war. We must defend girls' rights to education and so much more.

We hope that other States members of the Security Council will join us in adopting and implementing national action plans and strategies for the women and peace and security agenda. Those important tools hold us all accountable to our commitments, including tracking progress on gender equality, addressing gender-based violence, ensuring women's participation in decision-making forums that impact us and our commitment.

The world's women and girls need us, and we need them. Let us move forward, do right by women and girls, and use this agenda to advance peace and security for all. As we heard in the film, there can be no lasting peace without women.

**The President:** I now call on the Minister of State at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Lord Ahmad** (United Kingdom): Allow me to say, first, what a great pleasure it is to be attending this meeting of the Security Council under your stewardship, Madam President, and I congratulate your good self and, indeed, Kenya on choosing investing in women peacekeepers and peacebuilders as today's theme. As we have already heard, we are all clear that women's participation is fundamental to sustainable peace. Indeed, the evidence in support of that fact is abundantly clear.

I also therefore really welcome His Excellency the Secretary-General, and it is always a pleasure to hear from him. I know of his personal commitment to this

important agenda. Without women, there can be no lasting, sustainable peace. I pay tribute to his team, the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, and in doing so also welcome Her Excellency Sima Bahous to her new role as Executive Director of UN-Women. I can report to the Security Council that we have already met on the important issue of Afghan women and we look forward to strengthening that relationship in that respect.

Allow me to also join in the tribute that we have already heard being paid to Ms. Bineta Diop. I have had the honour and pleasure to be on several panels with Ms. Diop over many years, and her personal passion, advocacy and expertise are beyond excellent. We need to ensure that we really encompass that as we fulfil the ambitions, and indeed our obligations, for women and peace and security around the world.

I also welcome the contributions that we heard from Celia Velasco. It was important that Ms. Velasco reminded us, the Security Council, of our obligations on this important agenda.

Let me assure all colleagues that the United Kingdom remains fully committed to the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making and the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, indeed, across the peace in all peace efforts. Increasing the number of women peacekeepers and women in leadership roles should not just be a key priority. It is essential. It is the right thing to do. It is vital to ensure operational effectiveness.

I understand that the annual United Nations award for a champion of women in peacekeeping went to Major Steplyne Nyaboga of Kenya. Through your good offices, Madam President, we congratulate the Major on that achievement. We also recognize that Kenya is deploying such inspiring officers, who serve as an example not just to women, but to men and women across the world.

In that respect, I am delighted that the United Kingdom has supported and continues to support the Elsie Initiative since its launch, and has provided over £4.7 million since 2019 to encourage more women into peacekeeping and peacebuilding roles. We are also further committed to meeting the United Nations uniformed gender parity targets in that respect. To help, the United Kingdom is conducting a gender barrier study to better understand the obstacles faced by women

in the United Kingdom Armed Forces deploying in peacekeeping operations.

From those grass roots to the international stage, we encourage the United Nations, as a leading light, to lead by example and make women's direct participation a requirement — a fundamental requirement — across all peace processes it support. And it should be priority.

The United Kingdom has supported the Peacebuilding Fund since its inception, committing over £175 million to empower women and, indeed, young people. We also support the incredible women mediators networks and we continue to fund women mediators across the Commonwealth this year.

But let us be clear. Recently, in 2019, we amalgamated those mediator networks of women, and we must get women mediators at the front line of ensuring that we resolve conflict. Those women have the expertise and insight. Those women have the knowledge, yet what we fail to do is leverage that expertise effectively for peace around the world. More must be done.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom joins in the calls condemning the persistent attacks on women human rights defenders — a point well reflected in the contributions of the Executive Director of UN-Women.

We need to robustly tackle impunity and hold perpetrators to account when reprisals occur. And that work begins right now, at this time, right here in the Chamber.

The United Kingdom supports the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in tackling reprisals, in particular those committed against Security Council briefers. That work includes a specific focus on the gender dimensions of intimidation and reprisals. After all, if we cannot protect the briefers who come here to speak before the Security Council, they are being undermined and the purpose of the Security Council cannot be met. We must ensure that their protection is prioritized.

We have already heard, and rightly so, that the Afghanistan crisis has thrown a harsh light on the challenges before us. I have had the honour, as have many in the Chamber, to work directly with many women from across Afghanistan. Now that the Taliban is in control in that country, we must ensure that the rights of women and girls are central to any discussions with the Taliban. Women must be intrinsic to the conversation — intrinsic to the nation's future. And it

is vital that their voices be not just heard, but be at the heart of Afghanistan's future.

Negotiating and mediation teams need access to gender expertise — I have already referred to the women mediator networks — and women therefore should be included in all national delegations. In that regard, the United Kingdom continues to prioritize its work on the women and peace and security agenda and is currently developing its next national women and peace and security action plan, which is due for launch in early 2023.

Finally, let me assure the Council that we, the United Kingdom, commit to truly demonstrating the leadership we claim on women and peace and security and to ensure that that agenda, that priority, is a golden thread throughout all of our work on resolving conflict, building security and stability and, ultimately, for peace across the world.

**The President:** I now call on the Minister of State for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora of the Republic of Ireland.

**Mr. Brophy (Ireland):** I am delighted to join the Security Council today under the Kenyan presidency for the open debate on women and peace and security. Given the agreement among Ireland, Mexico and Kenya to form a trio of women and peace and security presidencies, I am especially pleased to be giving expression to our shared commitment to advancing that agenda. My thanks also go to the Secretary-General for his remarks and to the briefers, namely, Executive Director Bahous, Special Envoy Diop and Ms. Umenza Velasco, whose grass-roots perspective was particularly enlightening.

Ireland's statement this morning will focus on three key things that we need to do to close the persistent gap between rhetoric and reality on women and peace and security. Put simply, we need to empower the right people, raise up the right voices and spend money on the right things.

First, we must focus on empowering the right people. In order to fulfil the Security Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security, we must recognize a fundamental principle, that is, that those who make war cannot and should not have a monopoly on the terms of peace. Peacebuilding efforts that take account only, or chiefly, of the needs and wants of the parties to a conflict are doomed to fail. For peace to

work — and, importantly, to be sustained — it must be inclusive. We know that only too well from experience on our own island. That means peace processes with women at the table participating fully and equally.

There is no substitute for the direct participation of women in peace talks. That is why we welcome the emphasis Kenya has placed today on empowering local women peacebuilders, and in particular on the role that peacekeeping operations can play in supporting women's participation. That is all the more acute in the context of transitions. We thank all Council members for their joint work on the recent Irish-led resolution on peacekeeping transitions (resolution 2594 (2021)). That resolution importantly underlines that engagement by peace operations and national Governments with local communities and civil society, especially women, is key to managing the inevitable obstacles and setbacks on the long road to peace.

Peacekeeping needs to be gender responsive. Increasing the numbers of women peacekeepers is an important part of that, but it is also about deeper cultural change in our militaries. We are actually grappling with that challenge in Ireland, including through the establishment of an independent review. In that connection, I thank the Women of Honour group and serving personnel who have spoken out on the need for change.

We need only look to Afghanistan to understand what happens when women are excluded from politics and public life. The rights of women and girls should never be the last item on the agenda, or something to return to once everything else is agreed. The Council must stand with Afghan women and girls, whose erasure from public life can never be normalized.

That brings me to my second point, on raising up the right voices. It is critical that the Council listen to and heed women leaders, human rights defenders and civil society. We need to hear the unvarnished truth if we are to make good decisions grounded in evidence. We also need to hear a diversity of perspectives, such as that of Ms. Umenza Velasco who spoke so honestly here today. Ireland placed women civil society briefers at the heart of our presidency last month. In that context, we understood starkly the grave risks faced by women peacebuilders who raise up their voices, and in particular the risks faced by civil society briefers who speak to us around this table.

Women peacebuilders must be able to participate safely. It is incumbent upon us, as Council members, to ensure that. We cannot allow women to be silenced by the risk of reprisals against them or their loved ones. While it is very welcome that virtual working methods can facilitate the participation of grass-roots women in the Council, we also need to see civil society physically back in this Chamber and sitting around this horseshoe. There are some important people missing here today. There is a delegation of women from Afghanistan visiting New York today. This debate is for them. It is the reality they are living. And they should be here at the table.

My final point is about spending money on the right things. I want to commend the Secretary-General for his report (S/2021/827), which spotlights some uncomfortable realities on the choices that Governments make between military and social spending, prioritizing, as the report puts it, warfare over welfare. It is shocking that, even at the height of a global pandemic, military spending in much of the world was greater than pandemic-related health spending.

The evidence clearly shows a strong correlation between militarization and gender inequality. The world would be a different and much better place if welfare were privileged over warfare, especially by investing in the welfare of women and girls. Doing so lifts whole communities out of poverty and marginalization and builds resilient, inclusive, peaceful societies.

To that end, Ireland recently made a five-year pledge of \$1.5 million to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund to directly support grass-roots women peacebuilders and women-led organizations. We are also a long-standing contributor to the Peacebuilding Fund, which leads the way by allocating 40 per cent of its investments to supporting gender equality and women's empowerment.

You have called on us, Madam President, to pronounce our political commitment to greater investment in women and peace and security and women peacebuilders. Ireland is fully committed to advancing the women and peace and security agenda in its work here at the Council and in co-chairing the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, as a Board member of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action and in our development cooperation expenditure.

We are also committed to advancing the women and peace and security agenda within our own country, because that is not only a foreign policy concern confined to countries on the Council's agenda. The women and peace and security agenda must not be allowed to falter. As we seek to create a more equal and peaceful world, we must commit to empowering the right people, raising up the right voices and spending money on the right things.

**Mr. Dang** (Viet Nam): I would like to thank Kenya for convening this open debate and to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his valuable remarks. I thank Ms. Sima Sami Bahous and the other briefers for their insightful presentations. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of the wider United Nations membership in our open debate today and thank the Kenyan presidency for making that happen.

In many situations, women are the victims of conflict, but they are also active agents of peace. They have a unique ability to bridge gaps among conflicting groups in their communities and play an important role in responding to emergencies. During the coronavirus disease pandemic, the effectiveness of women's leadership has been clearly proven.

With regard to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, we share the Secretary-General's view that there has been promising progress. However, much remains to be done. In some places, women have been underrepresented in decision-making, pushed out of the workforce and subjected to a surge of violence. Their ability has been restricted. Such marginalization hinders the prevention of, and recovery from, crises, especially while impacting on the maintenance of international peace and security, in general. In that regard, we call for stronger efforts to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes in line with the Secretary-General's call to action on women transforming peace and security. To that end, we wish to highlight the following points.

First, we should value women's experiences, knowledge, understanding and expertise in all fields, including peace and security. Moreover, we should continue to remove persisting barriers and push for radical shifts to ensure that women are fully involved as equal partners from the earliest stage in each and every peace and political process. Their rights, interests and

needs should be guaranteed and promoted at all local, national and international levels. At the same time, women should be equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills to participate meaningfully in all spheres of political, social and economic life.

Secondly, the responsibility for implementing the women and peace and security agenda rests with all Member States. Therefore, all States should take further concrete and bold actions to ensure that the roles of women are mainstreamed in legal frameworks, policies, strategies and initiatives at all national, regional and international levels on peace and security. It also requires a comprehensive and whole-of-society approach, as it is a process in which everyone has a role to play and contribution to make. Any action plan, therefore, needs to involve all stakeholders — men, women, developing and developed countries, representatives from Governments, parliaments, judicial bodies, law enforcement agencies, the private sector and international organizations.

Thirdly, international cooperation, especially on capacity-building and the sharing of best practices, should be strengthened to enforce women's participation in United Nations-led processes. In that connection, we call for universal compliance by the donor community with a minimum of 15 per cent of official development assistance dedicated to advancing gender equality in conflict-affected countries.

Increasing the participation of women in every sphere of life is a key priority for Viet Nam. We acknowledge that women and their empowerment are crucial to advancing the culture of peace, based on their actual knowledge, wisdom, tolerance and understanding. They can play a vital role in educating young people to value peace, not war. Therefore, the role of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding has been integrated into the legal frameworks and policies of Viet Nam.

In their commitment to the noble United Nations peacekeeping missions in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, the number of Vietnamese women currently account for 21 per cent of those serving in our military contingents. Women in Viet Nam have always played an indispensable role, be it at war or at peace, in the defence or in the construction of the country. Currently, the number of women in senior leadership positions in ministerial agencies accounts for more than 30 per cent.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our readiness and commitment to join efforts with the international community to ensure full, equal and meaningful women's participation in peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

**Mr. Ladeb** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Ms. Bineta Diop and Ms. Celia Umenza Velasco for their valuable briefings. On behalf of Tunisia, I reiterate our sincere congratulations to former Assistant Secretary-General Bahous on her appointment as Executive Director of UN-Women. We welcome her participation at today's meeting and look forward to working with her.

We are meeting for the second year in a row to discuss the women and peace and security agenda as we continue to deal with a global pandemic and are more aware than ever of its disproportionate impact on women and girls, especially in conflict-affected areas.

As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/827) indicates, the progress achieved in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) remains far from fulfilling the commitments and promises that we made more than two decades ago. Despite all our efforts, the percentage of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations is no more than 23 per cent, and they represent no more than 5.2 per cent of military troops. Similarly, gender perspectives have remained absent from mainstream policies, in particular during crises. As illustrated by the Secretary-General's report, for example, most measures that have been adopted to respond to the coronavirus disease pandemic fail to take into account gender dimensions. The same also applies to humanitarian crises, which severely lack the necessary funding to meet the needs of girls and women.

Achieving peace and building back better depend upon our collective adoption of a comprehensive approach based on gender equality, including achieving the equal participation of women in peacebuilding operations. That requires greater coordination and concerted efforts among all actors at all levels and phases of peacekeeping operations. We must no longer view women as victims and vulnerable group but rather as effective and full partners in peace and decision-making.

Tunisia reiterates its commitment to implement the women and peace and security agenda while seeking full gender equality. We have worked to that end at the

national and international levels. Through our national efforts, Tunisian women have achieved high-level State positions, including Prime Minister for the first time in the history of our country and of the Arab world.

Tunisia continues to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant resolutions through our national plan, which was adopted in 2018. In addition, we have developed a number of sectoral plans to promote the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in its various political, security, human rights and development aspects.

At the international level, Tunisia is working to support and promote cooperation to achieve the full, equal and effective participation of women in peacekeeping operations and other leadership positions. In that context, Tunisia welcomes the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which in particular seeks to draw on women's support for peace processes and promote investment in the participation of local women.

Last but not least, Tunisia is working to develop innovative solutions to enable women and enhance their full participation, including through the use of modern technology. Accordingly, Tunisia has actively participated in the Generation Equality Forum, convened in France and Mexico, and we have led the working group on technology and innovation for gender equality. The working group has sought to close the gender gap in the digital sphere and ensure safe access for women and girls to modern technology.

Tunisia believes that the full and equal participation of women must be realized at the highest level of leadership and decision-making. However, it is important for peace processes to adopt a wider approach that involves all the different relevant segments of society at local and national levels, including women, civil society organizations, women's organizations, women journalists and women human rights defenders. In this context, we reiterate our call for a safe environment that allows all these parties to freely and actively participate.

It is also worth mentioning that our goal in closing the gender gap and achieving gender equality in peace processes must not be isolated from our efforts aimed at addressing the wider and deeper drivers of discrimination and exclusion that prevent us from reaching that goal. On this basis, Tunisia calls for more efforts to address the legal, social and cultural barriers

to gender equality and prevent the full and equal participation of women and girls at all levels.

In conclusion, we reiterate our determination to continue to build real partnerships with various stakeholders for the purpose of bringing about international peace and security through an approach that guarantees the equal, full and effective participation of women in peace and decision-making processes.

**Mr. Abarry** (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres; Ambassador Sima Sami Bahous, whom I congratulate on her appointment as Executive Director of UN-Women; Ms. Bineta Diop, Special Envoy of the African Union, whose unwavering commitment and fearlessness in action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo I greatly appreciate; and Ms. Celia Umenza Velasco, representative of civil society.

Twenty-one years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), it is clear that, despite the achievements made, much remains to be done to achieve gender equality and fully implement the women and peace and security agenda. Indeed, very few women participate meaningfully in peace processes, while most women and girls continue to be the primary victims of conflicts around the world. Women remain largely underrepresented in decision-making circles, even though it is clear that wherever women's full and effective involvement in peace processes has been achieved, the agreements reached have been more relevant than when they are excluded. Moreover, the lack of inclusiveness only exacerbates women's life conditions, which are already affected by the multifaceted challenges that beset them in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Yet no society can hope to prosper in the twenty-first century if it systematically excludes half of its population. My delegation would like to stress that the involvement of women in peace processes is simply a question of justice: if peace is a collective issue, why should it be discussed, consolidated and achieved without women?

For a country like the Niger, located in a region plagued by multiple crises, the women and peace and security agenda is not just a concept; it is also critical to maintaining peace and preventing conflict. The major challenges affecting the Sahel, from insecurity and the impact of climate change to economic development issues, have a disproportionate impact on women and girls and amplify existing inequalities.

Paradoxically, while women and girls are the main victims of conflict, only 22 per cent of peace agreements signed between 1995 and 2019 contain specific provisions on women. In terms of economic development, women's organizations in fragile and conflict areas, although underfunded, as they receive only 0.2 per cent of total bilateral aid, have played a vital role in bringing about major changes in government policies. They are simply the pulse of the informal economy in the region. There is therefore a need to allocate more funds to women's organizations working for peace, especially those working in communities at the grass-roots level.

My country, the Niger, has initiated reforms to positively change the trend for women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels by increasing the quota of women in elected positions from 15 to 25 per cent and appointments to senior Government positions from 25 to 30 per cent. When more women are in leadership positions in the public sector, they can fundamentally transform public policy in ways that bring about structural change. In addition, like 30 other African countries, the Niger has begun to implement the national action plan for women's peace and security, which was drafted following a consultation process involving women and men from all regions of the country. In this regard, we welcome the development of the African Union Continental Results Framework for Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa. This Framework, which constitutes a major step towards the implementation of this agenda in Africa, must be supported and popularized.

For its part, the Niger, working together with the African Union and the European Union, and with the support of UN-Women, the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, and several delegations present in this Chamber, has proceeded to set up the United Nations Group of Friends of Women of the Sahel, whose objectives are, inter alia, to establish and strengthen this approach by taking into account the gender dimension, which is an essential link in the success of stabilization and development efforts.

Now that our commitment has enabled us to put the normative framework in place, women must not only be around the table but must have a voice in all decision-making processes. Six years after the 2015 review of the women and peace and security agenda, it is sad to note that only half of the recommendations

made for the agenda have been implemented. It is therefore clear that there is a need for more systematic follow-up and effective implementation of these recommendations.

Accordingly, the Security Council must also do more. Consultations with civil society organizations are important and must be strengthened. The gap between our ambition, our commitments and reality can only be bridged if we adequately support the work of women peacebuilders. Particular attention should be paid to young women peacebuilders who face serious reprisals for their vital work.

Also, with regard to the inclusion of women in peace processes, the United Nations could develop strategies for the inclusion of women and report regularly on measures to be taken to fill the gaps. Involving national actors would be essential to ensure context-specific analyses, from the negotiation and mediation phases to the implementation phase. Furthermore, the Niger, as a troop-contributing country, calls for a more effective participation of women in peace operations, especially through the police component.

I will conclude by emphasizing that addressing some of the structural inequalities and discrimination against women and girls remains central to conflict prevention. Access to education remains a fundamental right, but also a pillar of conflict prevention and a means to ensure that women acquire the capital to take their rightful place in decision-making and leadership. In short, to refuse to recognize and protect women's rights is to choose to fuel conflict and undermine the foundations of development. This is not a choice that we are able to make.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome you, Madam President, and thank you for presiding over today's open debate. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres, Executive Director Bahous, Special Envoy Diop and Ms. Umenza Velasco for their briefings.

As shown by the briefings of the Secretary-General and the other speakers, protecting women in armed conflict, promoting their political participation and comprehensively advancing their rights and interests remain formidable tasks. Against the backdrop of a raging pandemic, the mounting turmoil and gains already achieved at risk of reversal, the international community should step up its efforts, coordinate actions and give more prominence to the women and peace and

security agenda. We should step up the protection of women in armed conflict.

In Palestine, conflicts in Gaza in May killed 38 and injured 398 women. Palestinian women have long lived under the shadow of occupation. In Afghanistan, women have paid dearly for the 20-year war. They face huge risks and challenges due to the recent hasty withdrawal of foreign forces. In other conflict areas, the trafficking of women and children and sexual violence still occur from time to time. The coronavirus disease pandemic has exacerbated the challenges faced by women in conflict.

To strengthen the protection of women in conflict, the international community should fully consider their actual difficulties and needs and provide timely humanitarian assistance. Robust comprehensive measures are needed to combat violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict. Particular attention should be given to ending abuses and threats against women by terrorist and extremist forces. In Syria and Iraq, a large number of female family members of foreign terrorist fighters are still detained. The relevant countries should shoulder their responsibilities and speed up screening and repatriation.

Preventing and defusing conflicts offer the ultimate protection of women. The Security Council should strive to eliminate the root causes of conflicts, find political settlements to hot-spot issues and resolve disputes peacefully through dialogue, mediation and consultation so that all women and children can enjoy, and live in, peace.

We should support a greater role for women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. United Nations political and peacekeeping missions should fully communicate and coordinate with the countries concerned and, based on the local conditions, support the participation of local women and women's organizations in peace processes and ensure women's representation and voices in peace talks and political arrangements.

Women's participation in peacekeeping should have our continued support. In the planning and deployment of peacekeeping operations there should continue to be equal opportunities for women's education, training and capacity-building and support for women's assumption of important leadership roles in such operations.

Of course, women's participation in peacekeeping is not for the sake of numerical indicators alone. More

importantly, women's unique advantages in areas such as the protection of vulnerable groups and community outreach should be leveraged to tangibly improve the overall performance of peacekeeping.

China actively champions and supports women's participation in peacekeeping. Over the past three decades, we have sent more than 1,000 women to various peacekeeping operations. In the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Chinese women peacekeepers are at the front line of mine clearance. In the past year alone, their engineering contingent detected and destroyed more than 2,200 mines, creating new safe zones for the Lebanese people.

In the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, a team of 10 Chinese women peacekeepers guard the security of a refugee camp, conduct long-distance patrols, share knowledge on women's rights and interests with local people and even teach foreign languages at an elementary school in the camp.

We should more vigorously advanced women's economic empowerment. The various barriers to women in conflict basically represent development gaps. The most important barrier is the development gap. To elevate women politically, their economic empowerment is essential. The international community should actively help conflict areas to review increased investment in women's education and help them to change their destiny through knowledge. Women's entrepreneurship should be encouraged and supported so that women can break free from poverty through their own efforts. Bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women should prioritize supporting women's economic empowerment.

Mandates for United Nations political and peacekeeping missions should include more support for women's development and economic empowerment. At the international level, China has actively cooperated on women's issues to promote women's advancement globally. In recent years, in developing countries we implemented 100 maternal- and child-health projects and 100 Happy Schools projects. We trained 130,000 women professionals in various fields in developing countries, thereby providing strong support for women's empowerment in those countries. In 2015, China and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization set up a prize for girls' and women's education. We have so far awarded the prize to 10 organizations from countries such as a Zimbabwe,

Kenya and Jamaica to encourage more people to work for girls' and women's education so as to join forces for global gender equality in education.

Along with the international community, China stands ready to work to expedite the realization of gender equality and promote global women's advancement in order to build a community of a shared and better future for all, including women.

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Kenya for convening this open debate on a priority issue for Mexico, namely, investing in women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. We also thank Mr. António Guterres and Ms. Sami Bahous, to whom Mexico wishes every success in her new post. We thank as well Ms. Bineta Diop and Ms. Celia Umenza Velasco for their briefings.

In line with our feminist foreign policy, we are fully committed to the women and peace and security agenda and respect for human rights and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity. Their full, equal and meaningful participation in the entire peace continuum is fundamental to the maintenance of peace and international security, as well as to ensuring sustainable peace.

Gender inequality, which still reflects patriarchal systems, misogyny and an unequal distribution of power in the world, is one of the root causes of conflict. For that reason, it is a priority to continue implementing actions with a gender and intersectional approach that takes into account the particular needs of women and girls, especially those who belong to the most excluded groups in society, such as indigenous women, Afro-descendants, migrants, refugees, people with disabilities and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons community.

It is true that we have a robust framework — 10 Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security; our obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Beijing Platform for Action; and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, as Mexico has pointed out time and again, it is time to make further progress in implementing all those commitments, as progress has been extremely limited.

This year Mexico adopted its first national action plan in follow-up to resolution 1325 (2000). As a contributor of personnel to peace operations, we have

about 35 per cent of women in uniform among the deployed personnel.

However, we are concerned that the participation of women in peacekeeping operations remains low due to the various barriers that they face at the different stages of recruitment, training, selection, deployment and operation. In that context, we commend Canada and the Elsie Initiative Fund for supporting Governments, such as ours, that want to break down those barriers and increase the number of women in peace operations.

We know well that deployed women are key to maintaining open communication and building trust with local host communities. They are also key to developing strategic partnerships with civil society. Women contribute to amplifying the voices and demands of women activists, mediators, peacebuilders, human rights defenders and journalists, and they identify existing gaps and exchange critical information that can help establish early-warning systems and prevent human rights violations. However, to enable greater participation by women military and police in peace operations, we need to invest in improving working conditions and physical infrastructure.

Equally, if we are to ensure equal participation in such operations, it is essential to guarantee women's physical safety and well-being, with a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of discrimination or violence, be it sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse.

That is why Mexico supports the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and encourages him to ensure that all stages of planning, mandate implementation and mission review throughout transition processes integrate a comprehensive gender analysis. We also endorse his "Call to action: women transforming peace and security".

The inclusion of local actors, such as women peacebuilders and human rights defenders, is also essential at all stages of peace and political processes and is a prerequisite for national ownership, as well as for a comprehensive post-pandemic recovery.

In addition, we urge this organ to continue to include the voices of women briefers in our deliberations and to take measures for their protection, and we condemn the increasing reprisals, intimidation and violence against them.

The effects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition on women

and girls is disproportionate and well-documented. Mexico emphatically calls on all States to refrain from transferring weapons in certain situations, including when there is a risk that they could be used for gender-based violence, and to curb the flow of small arms and light weapons that enable violence against women and girls.

It is equally important to invest more in ensuring that local disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes actively involve women in rebuilding the social fabric and reducing community violence, thereby contributing to sustainable development. Their inclusion in security sector reform is also essential for institution-building in States in transition.

We call on all Member States to ensure that all processes led by the Organization are inclusive and ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of diverse women at the heart of peace-agreement negotiations. As co-Chair, with Ireland, of the Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, Mexico will continue to work towards those objectives. It will also pursue those goals through the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact, launched this year at the United Nations Women's Generation Equality Forum.

In conclusion, convinced that the future of their country will only be successful with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, Mexico reiterates its commitment to women and girls in Afghanistan and condemns all violations of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia):** Estonia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

We thank the Secretary-General for his truly substantial report (S/2021/827), and we thank the briefers for their presentations. We welcome Ms. Bahous to her first briefing to the Security Council and look forward to a continued strong leadership by UN-Women on women and peace and security. The Council's annual debate on women and peace and security is not the only time in 12 months when we should focus on this topic. We need to do address it throughout the year. Rather, it is a time to take stock of where we have failed and where we have made steps forward.

The situation in Afghanistan presents a clear question on whether and how we, as the Council, are

able and willing to stand up for women's rights and their participation in political and peace processes. There can be no sustainable peace anywhere without women.

Reports of widespread conflict-related sexual violence in Tigray, characterized by the Secretary-General as "a horror of unknown scale but a familiar pattern", is but one example of the continuing sexual violence against women and girls — most of it going unreported and perpetrated with impunity, as demonstrated by the United Nations listings.

Women have been attacked, tortured or detained for participation in protests from Belarus to Myanmar. Targeted killings of women judges, activists and human rights defenders throughout 2020 and 2021 aimed to silence women in Afghanistan. As the Council, we cannot afford that silence.

The report presented by the Secretary-General is a reflection of the gradual and, at times, slow progress in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. In that connection, I would like to stress several points.

United Nations leadership in encouraging and supporting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women remains essential — from Syria to Yemen, from Libya to South Sudan. Our progress in that regard remains slow, and the lack of gender provisions in ceasefire agreements undermines women's participation in future peace processes. United Nations peacekeeping and political missions can support that leadership. Investing in women peacekeepers and mediators and providing resources for gender and women protection advisers provides a foundation.

The link between women and peace and security was affirmed by the Council over 20 years ago, yet it continues to be questioned in almost all of our deliberations. We therefore welcome the women and peace and security trio presidency and its aim to set this topic at the very centre of each discussion we have, including through country briefings dedicated to women and peace and security; heightened visibility; and the systematic integration of women and peace and security language in Council decisions. We look forward to the continuation of that tradition in the Council in the years to come and pledge to continue to support this work on our part.

The Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security plays a key role

in supporting that link. We welcome its relevant and timely meetings and recall that it is, first of all, up to us to ensure that its analysis and recommendations are taken forward in Council deliberations.

Threats and attacks against women activists and civil society representatives cannot lead to their exclusion or self-censorship. They need to be heard in the Council and at the local level. We call on the United Nations and others to enhance support frameworks and resources in order to promote their participation and safety. Estonia supports the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. Support for women human rights defenders is part of the activities foreseen in our action plan on women and peace and security.

We need to break the pattern of impunity. The inclusion of sexual violence and human rights-related benchmarks, such as for the sanctions regime for South Sudan and designating and using criteria related to sexual violence, including against politically active women, as by the Yemen Sanctions Committee, are a welcome part of that effort.

Lastly and simply put, we need more political will and resources. Women and peace and security remains a priority in our daily work in the Security Council. As a catalytic member of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, Estonia will continue to support UN-Women, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in their activities.

I can assure members that our work continues beyond our term in the Council.

**Ms. King** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks Kenya for convening today's annual open debate and for facilitating the in-person participation of the wider membership.

We also welcome the participation of our briefers: Secretary-General Guterres, Executive Director Bahous, whom it is very nice to see in her new role, Ms. Diop and Ms. Umenza Velasco.

We begin by paying tribute to women who continue to contribute to peacekeeping and peacebuilding as negotiators, mediators, heads of households, drivers of economies, peacekeepers and community, civil society and political leaders. We welcome the commitment

demonstrated to ensuring the equal and meaningful participation of women in United Nations special political missions, as well as in mediation support teams. However, the consistent inclusion of gender provisions in peace agreements and post-agreement implementation remains urgent. The absence of such provisions in all ceasefire agreements secured in the past few years is of particular concern. Even with increased efforts at the national, regional and multilateral levels, women's participation across the peace-security-development continuum still falls appallingly short. It is against that backdrop that we wish to make the following three points.

First, with a commitment to women, peace and security cited as a core priority of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, we commend the work of the Department of Peace Operations in creating space for women leaders to influence peace processes at the national level, including in the Darfur Women's Platform, their influence on the Juba Peace Agreement in the Sudan and the support provided for the protection and participation of women in elections in the Central African Republic. However, the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions must include operational elements to support Governments' quest for the equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes and across development initiatives.

Indeed, there is need for greater representation of women in disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and security sector reform. We welcome the commitment of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to the equal representation of women and men in all activities, as well as her Office's work in systematically tracking gender data on disarmament and integrating gender perspectives in preventing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. While those decisive actions are necessary, still missing is a commitment to consistent gender analysis at all levels of operation.

That brings us to our second point. We cannot overstate the need to apply anti-colonial-intersectional gender analysis as the standard in every aspect of the work of the Security Council. The expertise for conducting such analysis already resides within Member States currently grappling with the ongoing effects of histories of colonialism, conflict and economic and ecological precarity, as well as the added burden of navigating the pandemic.

Only 36 per cent of 98 Member States with women and peace and security national action plans have budget allocations for implementation. In particular, those action plans require budgetary support to fund localization programmes led by women civil society. Given the critical role of women civil society as architects of the women and peace and security and the overarching United Nations gender equality normative agendas, their expertise and proposed actions must feature in the solutions to end gender inequality.

The final point we wish to raise is that there is no circumstance under which conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence against women, girls and children, including reprisals against women peacebuilders and civil society, can be tolerated. We must insist on prevention and accountability and on transforming the conditions that produce that violence in the first place.

The fundamental challenge we face in advancing the women and peace and security agenda is the very challenge that confronts us in securing gender equity and justice globally. We must eliminate unequal relations of power. That transformation is urgent for women. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, with a Permanent Mission to the United Nations that comprises 85 per cent women and an all-female leadership team, takes this opportunity to honour the indomitable spirit of women at all levels who demand change and work to secure gender and social justice everywhere.

**Mr. Tirumurti** (India): We thank Kenya for convening the open debate on this very important issue. We thank the Secretary-General for his insights. I also thank Executive Director Sima Bahous, African Union Special Envoy Bineta Diop, and Ms. Celia Umenza Velasco for their briefings.

One of the most important indicators for strengthening the roots of democracy, pluralism and fundamental rights is the extent to which women are included in the institutions of governance. Greater involvement by women in higher echelons of decision-making considerably strengthens governance, more so in post-conflict situations.

The very first woman to occupy the Office of the President of the General Assembly was from India — Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Along with her, several other Indian women leaders contributed immensely to the United Nations in its formative years, shaping the discourse on human rights and gender equality. They

included Hansa Jivraj Mehta, Begum Shareefa Hamid Ali and Lakshmi Menon.

As India was in the process of institution-building at home, those women leaders brought their unique experience and perspective to the process of global norm-building at the United Nations. That tradition has continued to this day, with stellar contributions being made by Indian women to the United Nations. It is also not a coincidence that all the women Presidents of the General Assembly have been from the developing world. The first woman Prime Minister in the world was also from South Asia. Therefore, when we discuss the role of women in decision-making bodies, particularly in multilateral institutions, we should first understand that this is a global issue and not just a matter for developing countries alone.

India has moved from women's development to women-led development. The Constitution of India ensures the participation of women in local self-government by mandating the reservation of 33 per cent of the total number of seats for women. To ensure parity, 20 Indian states have made provisions for the reservation of 50 per cent of the total number of seats for women. Today in India, more than 1.3 million elected women representatives lead in the formulation and implementation of public policies at the grass-roots level. We even have all women *panchayats* at the grass-roots leadership level.

We need to look not only at the political empowerment of women, but also at their socioeconomic empowerment. That involves a complex set of governance-related issues, which need to be addressed in a holistic manner. For example, a growing digital divide can potentially alienate women from the mainstream. Keeping that in mind, India has not only undertaken numerous citizen-centric digital initiatives, but has also focused those services towards women to minimize the gender divide in digital India. We have opened online bank accounts for 430 million people, of which more than 55 per cent account-holders are women. During the coronavirus disease pandemic, that initiative has helped in direct benefit transfers to nearly 200 million women.

India has been an active participant in the deliberations on issues focusing on women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming at various United Nations bodies. During the past two decades, the normative frameworks on women and peace

and security, including the Declaration of Shared Commitments on Peacekeeping Operations and the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, have been considerably strengthened.

India fully supports the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse. India was the first country to contribute to the Secretary-General's Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and also signed the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse with the Secretary-General in 2017. The Prime Minister of India himself joined the circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations.

In 2007, India created history by deploying the first-ever all-female formed police unit (FPU) for United Nations peacekeeping in Liberia. That unit served in Liberia for a decade, and through its work served as an example of how the deployment of more female uniformed personnel can help the United Nation in its efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse. During the farewell of the Indian FPU, the then President of Liberia underlined the contribution of the force to

“inspiring Liberian women, imparting in them the spirit of professionalism and encouraging them to join operations that protect the nation”.

Today, a female engagement team from India is deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of the rapidly deployable battalion in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have also pledged a women formed police unit under the Peacekeeping Readiness Capability System.

Indian peacekeepers are playing an important mentoring role to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. Major Suman Gawani, an Indian woman peacekeeper deployed earlier with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, mentored over 230 United Nations military observers and ensured the presence of women military observers in each of the Mission's team sites. She also trained the South Sudanese Government forces and helped them launch their action plan to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. In recognition of her service, she was awarded the United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year award for 2019.

It is important that the United Nations be actively focused on issues related to the role of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. That is especially important in the context of Afghanistan. As affirmed in resolution 2593 (2021), we hope that women's rights will be fully protected and their voice duly reflected in shaping Afghanistan's future.

India stands ready to engage with all its partners to work towards ensuring the meaningful participation of women and the mainstreaming of women and peace and security considerations for building inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies.

Allow me to conclude by quoting an eminent philosopher, Swami Vivekananda:

“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing.”

**Mr. Kuzmin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Secretary-General António Guterres for presenting his assessments of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We listened most attentively to the statements made by our guests: Under-Secretary-General Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women; the African Union Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Diop; and Ms. Umenza Velasco.

Today's discussion confirms the relevance of resolution 1325 (2001), which was adopted more than 20 years ago. An important task of the Security Council in implementing that document is to ensure the full and effective participation of women in peace processes and in efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts.

Speaking at the third Eurasian Women's Forum, which was held earlier this month in St. Petersburg, the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Putin, said:

“Women's active participation in seeking solutions to global and local challenges, coupled with their proactive participation in all spheres of life, is in the public interest and helps to tap into human potential to the greatest extent. Today, that is undoubtedly a key factor in progress, in moving forward and in bringing concrete changes throughout the world, both within individual States and around the globe.”

The report submitted to the Security Council by the Secretary-General (S/2021/827) underscores the

significant progress made in many areas in terms of implementing the women and peace and security agenda. At the same time, we consider it extremely important to avoid duplication in the work of the different bodies of our Organization. The General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission are actively involved in work to promote the role of women, protect their rights and ensure gender equality. As for us in the Security Council, we should focus on situations that pose an imminent threat to international peace and security, in accordance with the prerogatives of the Security Council.

Often during this discussion, the importance of developing regional and national strategies and plans, and of establishing national structures for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, has been stressed. We are convinced that such measures must be adopted only when there is an objective need arising from the existence of an armed conflict or a post-conflict settlement situation. A routine expansion of bureaucratic structures in the absence of a conflict or situation vulnerable to conflict can hardly be justified. All approaches should be tailored to the specific situation and must not be one-size-fits-all. The most important thing is the result, not the appearance of work.

Women themselves must be effectively involved in the search for a solution to existing problems. In that regard, we express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his personal commitment to improving women's participation in peacekeeping operations, peace negotiations and political processes. At the same time, we call for additional measures to increase the role of women in the social and economic development of States in situations of armed conflict or in the post-conflict recovery stage. The use of coercive unilateral measures and politicized economic sanctions is absolutely unacceptable, as the victims of such sanctions are, first and foremost, women. Measures are needed to strengthen women's economic capacity and to expand women's access to financial and material resources and modern technology.

Women's empowerment, the elimination of poverty and increasing opportunities in the area of education are key priorities. Special attention should be paid to protecting families, mothers and traditional family values, which are the moral foundation of any society and the key to the successful development of present and future societies. Those and other issues should be at

the heart of the work of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, the Peacebuilding Commission and other United Nations bodies, with a view to making a positive contribution to the progressive development of the women and peace and security agenda and to achieve genuine consensus on that topic.

For its part, the Russian Federation wishes to reaffirm its readiness to interact constructively with all interested Member States to promote women's issues in the Security Council. At the same time, we advocate an equal and mutually respectful dialogue, taking into account alternative points of view in the spirit of the democratic foundations of the United Nations and in accordance with the principles of its Charter.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): I want to thank Kenya for convening today's debate, in particular for facilitating the participation of the broader membership. It is vital to the Security Council's work that we hear from everyone. In that respect, allow me to thank Secretary-General Guterres, Executive Director Bahous and Special Envoy Diop for their briefings. I also extend a special thanks to Ms. Umenza Velasco.

It is time to get serious about women's participation. This year's report (S/2021/827) highlights the trend of increasing global military spending. If achieving peace and security is our aim, we should invest more in women's participation and protection, not as an end in itself but as a prerequisite for peace and stability.

You asked us, Madam President, to bring commitments today. Therefore, in our next national action plan for women and peace and security, Norway will quadruple the target for funding in this field. Nevertheless, addressing the lack of funding alone is not enough.

Norway is present in more than 50 countries affected by conflict and crises, and we directly or indirectly support a number of peace processes. In every single one, we are deeply committed to women's full and substantive participation. We set the bar high, but we can clear it only through close cooperation with the United Nations, especially UN-Women, and local communities.

Conflicts and peace processes are prone to abrupt change, yet women peacebuilders always adapt, and we are committed to adapting our approaches with them. For example, when the informal talks in South Sudan

turned into revitalized peace talks, South Sudanese women demanded a seat at the table. That resulted in the inclusion of gender provisions and quotas in the final text of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Today there are several women in South Sudan in key political positions. Our partners already had the capacity and competency — what they needed was access and our collective support to make it happen.

We particularly welcome Kenya's emphasis today on investing in women peacebuilders and peacekeepers. They are truly key to advancing women's direct participation in all aspects of peace and security. We remain committed to the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which guides our collective aim of increasing women's participation in peace operations. It will also make missions better reflect the populations they serve and increase their effectiveness. That is not only a matter of numbers, but a matter of ensuring that women at all levels have direct and substantive influence on implementation. We are equally committed to ensuring women's participation in all aspects of the protection of civilians, which is critical to address the root causes of conflict.

We should never sacrifice women's right to participate in the name of protection. On the contrary, we should include them from the very start in the design of security measures and responses. For example, in Colombia, Norway has committed to support the efforts of UN-Women and the Ombudsman's Office and to work directly with women's organizations in enhancing early-warning systems and ensuring a gendered approach in implementing security measures. That is vital for women peacebuilders who have been risking their lives to defend the central commitments of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

Even here in the Council, just a year ago, at this very open debate, we heard Afghan civil society activist Zarqa Yaftali echoing the calls of many before her for the international community to ensure that women's rights and participation are not traded away for false promises of peace (see S/2020/1084). A year later, many strong female voices have had to flee in fear of the Taliban. Sadly, Afghan women are not alone in that situation. The same calls for protection and participation are clearly heard from Myanmar, Yemen, Syria and Somalia, to mention but a few places. Protection and participation

are interlinked and mutually reinforcing and require the strong commitment of the international community.

There have been numerous calls for a dedicated funding mechanism for women human rights defenders working in crisis, conflict and post-conflict situations. Norway is responding to that call. Today we are making another commitment: to provide seed funding for a new mechanism by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. That mechanism will provide flexible funding to support women human rights defenders at risk for both their participation and protection, not one at the cost of the other. We hope all other members will join us.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome Kenya's commitment to the women and peace and security agenda. I thank the new Director of UN-Women, to whom I express our full support, as well as the other briefers for their presentations.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the women peacebuilders around the world, sometimes at the risk of their own lives. As has been said over and over again, despite the progress made since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we are still a long way from achieving the objectives that we all collectively set. It is no longer a time for words but for action. Such action requires, first and foremost, the increased participation of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It is not simply a question of their recruitment.

In Mali, for example, women are committed to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. A woman General from the French Gendarmerie has been appointed to take command of the police component of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. Those are just two examples of our ability to take concrete action, but they also show that we must go further.

Our attention this year has been particularly focused on Afghanistan. Restrictions on the rights of women and girls, as well as the complete absence and sidelining of women at the political level, are unacceptable. The Security Council must reaffirm firmly and unambiguously that it will not accept the trampling of the rights of women and girls, or the erasure of the hard-won gains made by women and girls in recent years.

France is working for the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda as a

priority and is promoting an ambitious feminist diplomacy. We co-hosted the Generation Equality Forum with Mexico and civil society members under the auspices of UN-Women. The Forum enabled the mobilization of \$40 billion to be put towards gender equality efforts. The Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action was also launched on that occasion.

Moreover, France has finalized its third national action plan for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda for the period 2021 to 2025. France provides financial support in the development of training for gender military advisers and gender focal points deployed in peacekeeping operations in collaboration with the International Organization of La Francophonie. We have substantially increased our contribution to UN-Women, in particular to strengthen the participation of female soldiers in peacekeeping operations. Finally, France will also contribute approximately €6 million to the Global Survivors Fund, founded by Dr. Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, for survivors of sexual violence.

Rest assured that the implementation of resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda will remain a major focus of France's work in the Security Council.

**The President:** I wish to remind all remaining speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

**Ms. O'Neill** (Canada): I am grateful to deliver two statements today, the second of which will be on behalf of Canada. But first, I will speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, an informal network of 65 Member States representing all five regional groups of the United Nations and the European Union. We commend Kenya for its efforts to return to the more open and inclusive format that characterized open debates prior to the pandemic. Today the Group would like to emphasize three main points.

First, we call for urgent action to implement commitments to protect the full scope of women and girls' human rights and to achieve women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all political, peace and security decision-making processes. There has

been progress over 21 years, but it has been too little, including in political, security and peace processes supported by the United Nations itself. The Group of Friends strongly calls for all United Nations-supported peace processes to require and ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation. That must be made a priority.

It is imperative that women participate in decisions that affect their lives. Women cannot participate if they are not safe. The prevention of, and the protection from, violence against women and girls, including by addressing gender inequality, cannot continue to be ignored.

The Group expresses its unshakable solidarity with Afghan women and girls, who face the prospect of losing the gains for which they fought so hard for more than 20 years. We unequivocally reject any violation or limitation of their rights. We urge all parties, in particular the Taliban, to prioritize women and girls' rights and their full, equal and meaningful participation in all decisions on Afghanistan's future.

We also underscore the need to take all appropriate measures to immediately ensure women's and girls' safe and equitable access to education, given the vital role that education plays in reducing gender inequality and building sustainable peace.

We call on the Security Council to systematically include women in all its discussions and urge the Council to fully integrate women and peace and security commitments into all of its work and outcomes, including on country-specific situations and mission mandates. We encourage regional and subregional organizations to redouble their efforts in fully implementing this agenda.

We also encourage further progress on steps taken by the United Nations under the Secretary-General's leadership to integrate women's perspectives in peace processes; integrate women's participation as negotiators; integrate women's participation as mediators in mediation support teams and in other leadership positions in peace and security; address barriers for, and increase the meaningful participation of, uniformed women in United Nations peace operations; and engage with local women peacebuilders to implement United Nations peace efforts.

Secondly, the Group expresses its deep concern that women peacebuilders, human rights defenders

and advocates for gender equality and their family members continue to face intimidation, threats and violence. We are appalled that some who have briefed the Council have faced reprisals for doing so. As set out in resolution 2493 (2019), Member States must both unequivocally condemn and decisively address threats, harassment and violence against women peacebuilders and human rights defenders. We also urge all Member States, including Council members, to create a safe and enabling environment for all who protect and promote human rights and gender equality, fulfil their obligations to protect them and hold perpetrators accountable. We must recommit to comprehensive prevention and responses to sexual and gender-based violence.

Lastly, the Group calls for increased, predictable, sustained and flexible funding for local and grass-roots women's organizations and networks. As highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/827), there is a concerning lack of support for local women-led organizations and women leaders in fragile and conflict-affected countries, especially as compared to the upward trajectory of military spending globally.

It is critical that the international community act now to close the gaps between commitments to women and peace and security and their realization.

I thank you, Sir, for allowing me now to briefly address the Council on behalf of Canada.

More than ever, Canada is determined to reflect on the past year and proceed with humility. We want to talk about our successes but are also resolved to share openly our challenges, recognizing that we all have much to learn on this journey to true gender equality. A major issue that has come into focus for Canadians this year is sexual misconduct in our own armed forces. No service and no level has been immune, including some of our most senior leaders. We know that in order to address the issue meaningfully, as we are determined to do, we must examine every aspect of organizational culture. We also know that, in that challenge, we are not alone.

*(spoke in French)*

It is one of the many reasons for which we are proud to have spearheaded the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations. In addition to reaching the quantitative targets set out in the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, more important than statistics, it is a matter of ensuring work space that supports women

and eradicates harmful practices and unacceptable behaviours. We thank Australia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom for their financial contribution. We also thank Jordan, Liberia, Mexico, the Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo for the leadership that they have demonstrated as the first Member States to implement activities under the aegis of the Elsie Fund.

*(spoke in English)*

Earlier this year, Canada held a special meeting on women and peace and security, bringing together all 10 Ministers whose departments are partners of our national action plan in addition to our Chief of the Defence Staff, and the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Of course, they began by listening to women peacebuilders themselves — youth, indigenous and other leaders in Canada and abroad. A key takeaway was the importance of continuously supporting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of decision-making related to peace and security and preventing and protecting them from physical and online expressions of misogyny aimed at stopping them from carrying out their essential work.

Such support and engagement with women peacebuilders remains in need of being fully institutionalized within the United Nations system. The achieved gender parity in senior management is a welcome step. However, work remains to be done in transforming norms and requiring real accountability from United Nations global leadership, including from Special Envoys, Special Representatives and Heads of field operations.

The crisis in Afghanistan in particular is a litmus test of all of our commitments to implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. The meaningful direct inclusion of diverse Afghan women in all political processes is essential.

Lastly, indeed in Canada too, the women and peace and security agenda is relevant. Indigenous women and girls in particular, as well as gender and sexually diverse peacebuilders in Canada, continue to face unacceptable barriers to their full and effective participation in all aspects of decision-making. That is something that we are determined to change — once again, always with humility. As civil society and other briefers have said before the Council over the years, women do not need

to be given a voice; they have voice; and we must listen to them.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Ambassador for Gender and Diversity, European External Action Service.

**Ms. Ronner-Grubačić:** I am truly honoured and grateful to Kenya to be able to be in the Security Council Chamber today to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries of the Republic of Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Gender equality, the human rights of all women and girls and their empowerment are core values and political priorities for the European Union (EU). In all peace and security efforts, we are guided by the women and peace and security agenda. We must put the leadership and full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace operations and peace processes at the forefront. Women on the ground, civil society and local and grass-roots organizations defending their interests are important partners. We must ensure that they are supported by speaking out and acting against threats that endanger them in their work.

The EU commends the Secretary-General for promoting the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and supports his efforts aimed at promoting gender equality. We also note the launch of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action during the Generation Equality Forum hosted by France and Mexico in Paris.

Let me also reaffirm the EU's full support for women and girls in Afghanistan. Free and equal access to health services, employment and education are essential, as is freedom of movement. The EU expects full, equal and meaningful political, social and economic leadership and participation of women in Afghan society. Monitoring is key in this respect. We welcome the adoption by the Human Rights Council of the EU-led resolution appointing a special rapporteur for Afghanistan and look forward to cooperating with the rapporteur and with UN-Women, which I salute for its continued presence in Afghanistan.

Peace processes must take into account gender norms and roles and analyse the conflict through a gender lens. This cannot be just an afterthought or a side issue. It is not a question of simply adding women's interests around the edges of programmatic activities. On the contrary, it is a question of rights.

Moreover, implementing women and peace and security commitments requires funding. Peacekeeping missions and civil society organizations need to receive the necessary budgetary allocations. The responsibility lies with Member States to adopt national action plans, including adequate budgeting.

The EU would like to stress the importance of gender-responsive leadership and gender training and expects all the components of United Nations peacekeeping missions to create a safe and non-hostile environment for women and girls.

The protection of survivors and a survivor-centred approach, including in terms of justice and reparations, is essential, particularly in fragile conflict-affected settings and when survivors face stigma and discrimination. Ensuring full access to comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, is a key priority.

We are concerned by the persistent impunity for conflict-related sexual violence and call for accountability to be enforced. Where such crimes are perpetrated, we reiterate our support for the Security Council incorporating and applying sexual violence as a designation criterion in a systematic manner in United Nations sanction regimes.

We reconfirm the EU's full commitment to doing its part on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. And we again thank the Kenyan presidency for putting this issue on the agenda.

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

**Mr. Fifield** (Australia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the MIKTA Group of countries — Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia — and then, in my national capacity, a short statement on behalf of Australia.

Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are priorities for the MIKTA Group. This prioritization calls for the full and effective implementation of the women and peace and security

agenda. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights, safety and dignity of women and girls are goals in themselves and essential for the achievement of sustainable peace.

Recent events in Afghanistan highlighted the critical importance of the women and peace and security agenda. Delivering life-saving and empowering outcomes for peace and security is a collective endeavour for Governments, civil society, women's rights organizations and women peacebuilders. We must ensure that all women and girls in all conflicts and crises are party to resolution efforts, have their basic needs met and recourse to justice where their rights are violated, and that they continue to have access such essential services as quality education, employment and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, and mental and psychosocial support. The full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes, including at all levels of decision-making and leadership, is central to our national action plans and policies.

It is also essential to mainstream gender equality and gender analysis, as acknowledged in our national action plans and policies and the Security Council's women and peace and security resolutions. We will be successful in implementing the women and peace and security agenda if we address the root causes of gender inequality and promote and defend the human rights of women and girls. We recognize that the violence inflicted on all women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, reprisals, harmful practices and trafficking is particularly pernicious and therefore a priority for action. A survivor-centred approach is key to restoring safety and dignity, ensuring access to justice and accountability and ending impunity.

The MIKTA Group appreciates this year's report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2021/827). The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has had a disproportionate negative impact on the lives of women and girls, especially in conflict-affected states. COVID-19 has also highlighted the continued exclusion of women from decision-making processes and leadership, as well as greater rates of violence.

As a matter of human rights and international peace and security, the Secretary-General rightly stresses the significance of women's participation and leadership in peace processes, peace operations, political transitions and the security sector, as well as

gender provisions in ceasefires and peace agreements. In this regard, investing in women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the theme of this year's debate, is timely. MIKTA strongly supports the meaningful engagement and leadership of women of all backgrounds in all aspects of peace processes. This includes, for example, investments in the Elsie Initiative Fund, deployment of women to United Nations peace operations, efforts to increase women representation in the security sector, assistance to grass-roots networks of women peacemakers, and support for the Secretary-General's uniformed gender parity strategy, as clearly reflected in resolution 2538 (2020). Women and girls everywhere have the right to lives of safety, security and dignity.

The MIKTA Group recommits to promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. We will meet our obligations under the women and peace and security agenda. We look forward to working with other States Members of the United Nations as we progress towards our common goal of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls for international peace and security and sustainable development.

I would now like to offer a short statement in my national capacity on behalf of Australia.

Implementation of the women and peace and security agenda requires inclusive and sustained action at all levels, from the grass roots to global gatherings. It is essential that we work with and support the leadership of women civil-society actors, human rights defenders

and peacebuilders. Their voices and legitimacy must be projected and defended at all levels. For peace and security to replace crisis and conflict, we need more women in analysis and decision-making roles. We also need men to take action on the women and peace and security agenda.

In April, Australia launched its second national action plan on women and peace and security, guiding us to 2031. We will continue to contribute to the protection and promotion of women's and girls' human rights, the prevention and resolution of conflict and the establishment of enduring peace. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security remains at the centre of our efforts. We will also focus on reducing sexual and gender-based violence, and we will support resilience, security and just responses to crises and conflicts. Our leadership will be accountable.

Eliminating gender inequalities and all forms of discrimination against women and girls is our shared imperative. We must promote, protect and defend the human rights of women and girls in all contexts. Through you, Mr. President, let me again thank Kenya for hosting this debate.

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

*The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.*