

Statement by Botswana at the Open Debate of the United Nations Security Council

Ms. Mogobe (Botswana): I would like to start by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. We wish you every success in the continued discharge of your duties. We would like to echo the appreciation the delegations that spoke before us have expressed to you for organizing this very important meeting and for the opportunity to be briefed by the personalities you succeeded in assembling for that purpose. The information they shared with us earlier has been extremely insightful and helps to broaden our understanding of the issue we are discussing today.

We also take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the subject matter, which we found informative, even though some aspects therein, pertaining in particular to the risks faced by populations in armed conflict as well as to peacekeeping mission operations, were cause for some concern.

Botswana joins the international community in deploring the attacks claiming innocent lives as well as the gross human rights violations occurring in the increasing number of war zones and areas of violent conflict across the world. We find it tragic indeed that the lives of the innocent, including women and children, continue to be lost due to indiscriminate killings by those who apparently have a complete disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law.

It is true that States have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens, be it in armed conflict situations or wherever human rights abuses occur. It is, however, also true that all responsible members of the international community have a critical role to play in the construction of societies that are strong enough to prevent and address atrocities. Given the enormity of populations at risk, it can therefore be argued that we, the members of the international community, have not been proactive enough in upholding the second pillar of the responsibility to protect and building that required capacity that would assist States in shielding their populations from harm.

What remains an unequivocal fact is that more needs to be done to ensure accountability and compliance with international law. We therefore support the clarion call for the Security Council to fully exercise its Charter mandate and ensure the maintenance of international peace and security, as that would represent a significant step towards the compliance we seek. In that regard, it would also be important for the relationship between the Security Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to be strengthened, and for the work of the Court to be facilitated so that it may hold perpetrators of human rights violations and other mass atrocities accountable.

The concerns I have just raised notwithstanding, it is only fair that the Council be credited for its notable efforts in this regard. We are informed that at present the Security Council has 16 peacekeeping operations deployed around the world. We commend the Council for this work, which understandably presents its own variety of complex challenges. These include ensuring the very safety of the personnel involved in peacekeeping operations, as they themselves are increasingly becoming targets in the conflicts they are deployed to end. We have recently seen United Nations peacekeepers killed while on duty in countries in conflict. The proliferation of terrorist groups and foreign fighters also serves to increase the potential dangers and risks facing peacekeeping missions. We have also seen young school girls abducted and used as pawns by terrorists. These evolving dynamics necessitate a comprehensive review, including the development of an all-inclusive framework that ensures the security and safety of United Nations personnel in their various assignments, as well as that of the security forces and rapid-response teams in the affected countries. These mechanisms must also elaborate methods through which women and girls in conflict situations can be protected.

I shall now turn to the specific focus of today's debate. As other delegations have emphatically pointed out, it is women and girls who suffer the most insidious acts of war, including sexual violations, gender-based violence and other human rights abuses. As this year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, there

could me no more opportune a time for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to the protection of women and girls in all situations, as well as to their advancement, to gender equality and, within the context of today's debate, to the six strategic objectives focusing on women and armed conflict. Among others, those include the need to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels, to promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace and to provide protection, assistance and training to refugee and other displaced women. The need for a rededication to these objectives cannot be overemphasized. It is critical fully to implement resolution 1325 (2000). We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's high-level review thereof, which is scheduled for later this year.

We also see the international community readying itself to adopt a new global agenda later this year intended to deliver the future we want. To realize this goal, it is clear that we will need to redouble our collective efforts to ensure the protection of current and future generations.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Botswana's support for international efforts aimed at protecting the lives of innocent people, women and girls in particular.