

Madam President,

We would like to thank Germany for organising this debate.

Belgium welcomes the strategy on gender equality of January 2019 under resolution UNSC 2242. The number of women serving under the UN flag is rising, but, as the Secretary-General said, "*We must do more*".

In 2019, 4% of the UN peacekeeping force and 8% of police in UN operations are women – indeed we need to do more at all levels and in all positions.

It is not enough to simply target the recruitment process: women must be able to pursue their career with the same opportunities as men.

I wish to submit a few possible solutions:

Firstly, we have to overcome the obstacles concerning deployment

Deployment conditions must be adapted to the candidates' professional and personal needs. Among these measures in the field I am thinking, in particular, of medical infrastructure and services adapted to women. This also applies to periods of deployment. In this respect, the role of gender advisers is essential.

Secondly, we must encourage troop contributing countries to deploy more women

Troop and police contributing countries must deploy more women in accordance with the commitments made as part of the "Action for Peacekeeping" initiative. We understand this represents a major challenge.

As for Belgium, the number of women deployed in UN operations places us above average. However, on a national level, we still have much to do. In Belgian Defence, just 8% of the 27,000 active military staff are women. The image of a "man's world" still persists. Recruitment campaigns have been set up to attract more young women. I wish to highlight one major principle among our armed forces, namely equality. Women have the same opportunities as men, as much in terms of recruitment, training, remuneration, promotions as in terms of operational deployment.

This year, Belgian Defence is proposing the creation of a *Mixed Gender Engagement team* among the Belgian special forces, which should be effective by the start of 2020.

Thirdly, it is important to create a healthy environment for women during operations

A male-dominated culture in the army and the police constitutes an obstacle to women's participation. Cases of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse contribute to an environment perceived by women as being toxic or dangerous.

Belgium is very active in this field: our country has signed the United Nations Compact on the prevention and the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse. The Prime Minister participates in the "Circle of Leadership" created by the SG. We fund a rights of victims of sexual abuse position at the UNMISS. We are all responsible for setting up a transparent and accessible system of

empowerment. Training on the prevention of harassment and on protection should continue, the silence must be broken and practical resources must be set up that allow these matters to be denounced in an atmosphere of trust.

Finally, we must promote the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda within the Council

The Security Council must continue to promote the essential role of women throughout the cycle of conflict: from prevention to peacebuilding.

The "Women, Peace and Security" agenda is comprehensive and constantly evolving. Throughout the world, women are drivers of change. There is great demand and civilian society often shows us the way. The Security Council must be up to the task. We have a responsibility, in particular that of translating these demands into peacekeeping operation mandates, such as, for example, support for advisors on the protection of women during missions.

By excluding half of humankind from peace efforts we are setting ourselves up for failure. Belgium is entirely convinced that gender equality is essential for achieving lasting peace and security.

Thank you.