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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SECURITY COUNCIL - OPEN DEBATE ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INCLUSION IN CONFLICT-SETTINGS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

STATEMENT BY MYRIAM OEHRI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

Madam President,

Thank you for convening this important debate on the occasion of International Women's Day, gravely overshadowed by the aggression against Ukraine and the terrible reports reaching us regularly from the ground. Armed conflict puts a particular burden on women and girls and is a setback in the achievement of gender equality. The war in Ukraine is no exception. Ukrainian women and girls suffer violence and trauma, discrimination, marginalization and exclusion in various ways. But their resilience is inspiring: They continue to be leaders in the civilian, political, military and humanitarian responses to the aggression and stand up with courage and conviction for peace and the sovereignty of their country.

Through the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda the international community has recognized the diverse and crucial roles women play as agents of change – in preventing and resolving conflict, countering terrorism and violent extremism, building post-conflict peace and stability, and defending human rights and fundamental freedoms. We have seen this all over the world – be it in Afghanistan, Belarus or Myanmar. We stand in support of women and girls around the globe in their roles as politicians, lawyers, mediators, civil society leaders, peaceful protestors, human rights defenders, journalists and media workers. For them to succeed, we need to invest more in enabling environments that are free of discrimination and stigmatization.

Madam President,

Ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all stages of decision making remains as important for gender equality as is investing in areas where they are notoriously discriminated or neglected. The limited access of women to resources, and their financial and economic exclusions we are addressing today is both cause and consequence of gender inequity. Women form a disproportionately large share of the world's unbanked population. Inequalities in employment and earnings limit them in opening accounts in formal financial institutions. In conflict affected settings, women's economic empowerment is even more restricted. Marginalized women, who are the majority of victims and survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking, face further exclusion.

Our response in line with the 2030 Agenda can be strengthened by leveraging the role played by the financial sector in ending these crimes. This is why we responded directly to calls from the UN Security Council to partner with the private sector in tackling modern slavery and human trafficking, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Together with other Governments, the private sector and United Nations University we have created a public-private partnership called the Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking Initiative – "FAST" in short. FAST aims at engaging the financial sector to tackle trafficking and slavery, including doing more to enhance financial inclusion of women and girls to prevent vulnerability in the first place. We invite all States, the UN system, International Financial Institutions, and financial actors to join our efforts. Together we must protect and empower all women and girls – a necessary precondition for a more peaceful, just, inclusive and sustainable world.

I thank you.