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Press Stakeout on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), prior to United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Preventing CRSV through demilitarisation and genderresponsive disarmament, April 2024

We, the Security Council signatories of the Shared Commitments on Women and Peace and Security (WPS) - Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and my own country, Malta – reaffirm our commitment to ensure that the WPS agenda is fully and meaningfully integrated into all aspects of our work, and to amplify and support the crucial work of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders.

Today we are convening to address strategies for preventing conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) through demilitarisation and gender-responsive disarmament. We welcome the Secretary General’s Report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (S/2024/292), which documents the role of arms proliferation and increased militarisation in escalating conflict and heightened levels of conflict related sexual violence, and in limiting women's political participation and activism as human rights defenders, peacebuilders, and journalists.

We are gravely concerned about the detrimental and disproportionate impact of the ineffective management, diversion, illicit trafficking, proliferation, destabilising accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition on women and girls, including the exacerbation of discrimination, gender inequality, and sexual and gender-based violence.

We urge all States to leverage the potential of conventional arms control and disarmament treaties, instruments, and measures to prevent CRSV, including through fully and effectively implementing and reporting on the gender-related provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty, by those that are parties to the ATT, as well as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and the recently adopted Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. We reiterate the Security Council’s call for women’s full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation in all levels of decision-making and in the design and implementation of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts.

By aligning national action plans on WPS and on small arms control, and by controlling and sharing, as appropriate, sex and age disaggregated data, Member States can strengthen the gender responsiveness of national arms control policies and legislation.

We are deeply concerned about the security risks facing women and girls in situations where peace operations are undergoing transitions and phased drawdowns, and recognise the need for specialised capacities, including women's protection and gender advisers. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to ensuring women's full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation in all UN facilitated peace negotiations, ceasefire negotiations, and security sector reforms, and urge that provisions prohibiting CRSV are explicitly included in these agreements as well as in monitoring frameworks.

We underscore the importance of advancing gender equality within peace operations and through their mandates, including through CRSV protection mechanisms. At the same time, we must redouble our efforts to support survivors and survivor groups, strengthen the capacity of women's organisations to participate in conventional disarmament efforts, and mitigate risks for women actively engaged in the fight against the illicit arms trade.

In conclusion, we underscore the importance of addressing the gendered root causes of violence. We reaffirm our commitment to addressing the nexus between militarisation, small arms and light weapons proliferation, and conflict-related sexual violence. By adopting survivor-centered approaches and promoting gender-responsive conventional disarmament, we aim to mitigate the devastating impact of armed conflict on women and girls worldwide.

I thank you.