Thank you Madam President.

We deeply appreciate and thank the Special Rapporteur, Michel Forst, and his staff for valuing WHRDs knowledge and voice and providing safe spaces to listen to them. His support to our movements over the past 6 years has been vital.

I am here this week with a number of my WHRD colleagues from around the world. As your report notes, WHRDs are operating in conflict or post-conflict areas and often working in life-threatening circumstances.

Today, conflict needs to be understood as one that also looks beyond war. Conflict includes where State violence is justified and the rule of law bypassed in the name of protecting national security which disproportionately affects women. This serves as a violent form of social control, particularly of WHRDs and racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. For instance:

- Widespread violence against protest movements, such as in Chile
- Communal violence, where culture and religion are politically used to drive tensions, such as in India
- Conflict over land and territory, such as the challenges faced by the San indigenous population in Namibia.
- Vilification and criminalization of activists in the Philippines
- Culture of impunity, and legitimizing crimes against humanity in Guatemala and El Salvador

WHRDs face pushback first on our bodily autonomy. Our bodies are used as weapons, including in narratives to discredit our work and our movements. This has to end now.

WHRDs are active agents in:

- Documenting violations, organizing and protecting communities, and mounting resistance during conflicts;
- Providing early-warning in the onset of conflict, particularly for prevention of escalation;
- Bringing solutions for transformational change and healing to address the structural and systemic root causes of conflict;
- Ensuring justice and accountability for gross and systematic human rights violations;
- Undertaking collective care and protection strategies, and addressing trauma, for communities and movements.

In light of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, we build on the work of WHRDs. How can the mandate ensure that WHRDs power and protection are placed at the center of the Beijing +25 processes?

Thank you Madam President.