

Ms. Kadare (Albania):

First, I would like to thank the United Kingdom presidency of the Council for convening this meeting on such a critical and urgent subject.

Albania aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Human trafficking is a global problem, affecting both developed and developing countries, rich and poor societies. It is transnational, and its victims are everywhere. Therefore, it is our joint responsibility to put an end to this sordid crime and horrendous violation of human rights.

It is evident that the most vulnerable people are those caught in conflict: women, children, refugees. Trafficking in conflict zones is certainly not a new phenomenon. It is a well known and documented fact not only in the Middle East, but also in Africa, Asia and even Europe. During the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, sexual violence was systematically used to strike terror and humiliation into civilian populations. Yet, despite international awareness and outrage, we still have an incomplete understanding of human trafficking. Our capacities to prosecute the traffickers and assist the victims are inadequate, while the United Nations system's anti-trafficking efforts are fragmented and at times overlapping.

We have to admit that, despite our efforts, far from abating, human trafficking has flourished alarmingly. Combined with terrorism, it has led to new barbarisms, unprecedented in their scope and violence. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab are using human trafficking and sexual violence, with full impunity, as a weapon of terror, but also as an important source of revenue, with low risk and extraordinary profit. We cannot allow this to continue. There is nothing more demoralizing and undermining for the values we stand for than the culture of impunity.

However, trafficking in situations of conflict is not limited to the context of terrorism. The different conflicts raging today are leading to the mass displacement of particularly vulnerable groups, which easily fall prey to exploitation and trafficking networks.

Resolution 2331 (2016), which Albania has co-sponsored, recognizes that human trafficking represents a threat to international peace and security. Furthermore, it identifies the complex nexus that exists between the trafficking in persons, transnational organized crime, conflict and terrorism. As the first action-oriented resolution of the Council to address trafficking in persons in conflict situations, it was an important step forward.

But awareness-raising and statements of condemnation are not enough. International coordinated action is urgently needed. We have at our disposal the necessary international legal framework — the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, including the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. It is within that framework that we need to strengthen our engagement and our cooperation at the regional and international levels. Intelligence sharing, financial investigations, anti-money-laundering laws and judicial cooperation — the whole arsenal that we have at our disposal should be deployed to combat human trafficking and dismantle terrorist networks. Civil society, the private sector and the media should be our major partners, especially with regard to the prevention and protection of victims.

Albania remains deeply committed to combating human trafficking. In line with the Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, our national strategy in the fight against the trafficking of human beings and its action plan are victim-centred and gender-sensitive. At the regional level, Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo signed last December a joint

declaration expressing their commitment to ensuring the application of unified procedures for the identification and protection of victims of trafficking.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that an integrated multilateral action is needed to combat this pervasive transnational crime. Furthermore, we encourage the Secretary-General to strengthen the synergies between United Nations agencies and to ensure that the United Nations system strategically coordinates its anti-trafficking efforts across its development, peace and security, and human rights pillars, as well as its humanitarian action. Albania stands ready to actively participate in discussions and activities to reinforce the response of the United Nations in eradicating this scourge.