

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*):

Bolivia would like to thank the presidency of the United Kingdom for having taken the initiative of holding this debate. First and foremost, we would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres; the Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Fedotov; and Mr. Kevin Hyland, Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner, for their respective briefings.

According to the 2016 UNODC *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, 79 per cent of the victims of human trafficking are women and children, with a clear example being the Yazidi women and girls who were submitted to various kinds of slavery and torture by the so-called Islamic State. Due to that situation, a lot of them have had to leave their countries of origin to find more favourable living conditions. Similarly, against the backdrop of the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which is now under way, we are deeply concerned to note that, according to the UNODC report I just mentioned, 20 per cent of the victims of forced labour and 72 per cent of those of sexual exploitation are women — a situation that clearly cannot be ignored.

On the one hand, the economic asymmetries between the North and South that are reflected in the way in which wealth is concentrated in some countries, together with the neoliberal economic and financial system, are some of the structural causes of poverty and lead to large migration flows. On the other hand, because of war and armed conflict, many people are forced to leave their countries of origin and become displaced persons or refugees. In many cases, those conflicts and wars are the result of regime-change policies, which mostly do not lead to peaceful and democratic transitions, but instead involve deep-seated structural changes and also result in violence because of a lack of political stability. The upshot of this is the forced displacement of tens of millions of people around the world since the end of 2015, increasing by 6 million as compared to the previous year.

It is undeniable that armed violence and terrorism are closely linked to human trafficking and associated crimes. International criminal groups and terrorist groups, which the Council and all States Members of the Organization are combating, such as the so-called Islamic State, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and Al-Qaida, among others, are those that benefit from human trafficking and use those economic gains to finance their terrorist activities. It is clear that terrorism and the threat of violence, the crisis of capitalism, repression and poverty have reduced the freedom and civil and political rights of millions of citizens around the world. In that connection, the responsibility of the countries of all Members of the United Nations is to first recognize a historic debt towards those people who are suffering because of actions often perpetrated through conflicts that were initiated, promoted and led by certain military and economic Powers.

That is why we believe that as some countries close their borders, build walls, criminalize immigration and deny access to refugees they are not only promoting human trafficking, but they are also promoting xenophobia, discrimination and racism. That is also serving to fuel the rhetoric of terrorist groups that we all want to fight, including intolerance to different religious beliefs and the terrible way in which this is becoming associated with terrorism. In that regard, there is no justification for violating the basic principles of human rights. The international community cannot turn its back on this reality.

It is also important to mention the economic benefits resulting from human trafficking. They form part of the global financial system through money laundering and tax havens, which tend to diminish or eliminate the regulations, especially in the area of investment of the service industry. These things are used by organized crime to legitimize their profits. In that regard, it would be important to look into access to these tax havens by terrorist or criminal groups.

In my own region of Latin America and the Caribbean, we are no strangers to the evils of human trafficking. My country, too, is a victim of such crimes, in particular sexual exploitation and forced

labour. In that regard, it is important to call for the establishment of various mechanisms at the regional level to reinforce the fight at the regional as well as national levels. In Bolivia, since 2002, there has been a comprehensive law against trafficking in persons the aim of is to fight that scourge. Moreover, the State is also providing the necessary resources to ensure the effectiveness of that campaign.

On the other hand, through this forum, as President Evo Morales Ayma proposed, I would like to point out that Bolivia has proposed that we work together on the concept of universal citizenship, thereby making it possible for everyone wherever they are to be able to move freely, which would contribute to eliminate trafficking in persons. As a result of that proposal, the World Conference of the Peoples for a World without Walls towards universal citizenship will be held in Bolivia on 20 and 21 June, with representatives from all continents attending. We invite not only States but fundamentally social organizations to participate in that summit.

I reiterate clearly for the benefit of the Security Council that while human trafficking is a problem that we have only taken on recently, it is relevant to the principles governing this organ with regard to dealing with international peace and security. It is therefore essential that we combat that scourge, which affects human rights and life itself.

I will end my statement by recalling what Stephen O'Brien told us a few days ago in the Council (see S/PV.7897). At the beginning of the year, we were facing the greatest humanitarian crisis since the founding of the United Nations, but at the same time I believe that it is important to remember that the world's population is living in a time that is witnessing the greatest level of inequality in its history. Those two facts — the humanitarian crisis and that inequality — are not unrelated or inseparable.