

Mr. Chvojka (Czech Republic):

I thank the United Kingdom presidency for organizing this open debate on trafficking in persons in conflict situations. Human trafficking remains one of the most common violations of human rights worldwide. Unfortunately, the Czech Republic is no exception.

We are a target and transit country for women and children subjected to sex trafficking and for men and women subjected to forced labour. According to our annual *Trafficking in Human Beings Report*, 50 victims of human trafficking were identified in the Czech Republic, mainly from Ukraine, Nigeria, Romania or Hungary. In 2016, the Czech Government adopted a new national strategy to combat trafficking in human beings. The strategy emphasizes the need for a coordinated approach in prosecuting human trafficking and pays increased attention to assistance rendered to victims. Its priorities are the prevention of forced labour and trafficking in children. Gender equality and respect for the special needs of more vulnerable victims are its basic principles.

The main framework for practical assistance to victims is the Government programme on support for and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings. Annually, more than 50 victims of various forms of human trafficking enter the programme. The programme represents a very effective tool of victim support and very often leads to increased chances of the successful prosecution of perpetrators.

To keep the programme functional, we must apply wider preventive and educational measures. Every year, the Czech Government provides financial resources to non-governmental organizations focusing on preventive and informative activities on human trafficking. One such preventive activity is social counselling aimed at the potential victims of trafficking, provided through low-threshold counselling centres run by specialized non-governmental organizations.

I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to discuss this crucial issue. We need to send a clear message to all of the victims of human trafficking. We insist on their dignity and human rights, and we are ready to use every chance to finally make human trafficking a thing of the past.