

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*speak in Arabic*):

Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on convening today's important debate. I would also like to thank the briefers for their invaluable contributions.

Egypt attaches great importance to the issue of human trafficking. Egypt has always been and will always be a pioneer in fighting all forms of slavery and similar practices, such as indentured servitude, recruitment by armed groups and forced labour. Egypt believes that human trafficking is a criminal practice that runs counter to recognized human values.

Egypt stresses that trafficking in humans follows extremely diverse patterns which have become increasingly complex due to a growing number of elements, including developments in information and communications technology and the tactics used by criminal groups to form organized networks that traffick in humans. In addition, the lack of accurate and reliable data and statistics allow for these crimes to be committed in the dark, giving rise to billions of dollars of profit.

Under Egyptian law, human trafficking is a hybrid crime involving transnational organized crime networks that commit other criminal acts such as terrorism, drug trafficking, money-laundering, migrant- and refugee-smuggling and the arms trade, all of which are a constant threat to international peace and security. In this regard, Egypt has ratified all regional and international conventions and instruments related to the subject. The national laws of Egypt include severe punishments for crimes related to the different forms of this practice. The national strategy to combat and prevent human trafficking was launched in 2016 and is the framework for transparent cooperation among Government bodies and civil society in accordance with the imperatives of national security.

Last December's adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2331 (2016), on human trafficking in armed conflict, was an important landmark in the history of the Council (see S/PV.7847). In this respect, we would like to stress the following points. First, the Council should address all forms of human trafficking equally since, under the Palermo Protocol, they have equal legal impacts. Secondly, the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocol should serve as the basis of States' obligations in relation to fighting human trafficking. The main pillar of the Convention, related to exploitation, should be implemented. Thirdly, the international community should redouble its efforts to stop funding all terrorist groups, including by stopping human trafficking, and all international tools should be used in this respect. Fourthly, human trafficking, particularly the trafficking in women and girls, should not be linked to religion, nationality or civilization. Religious and traditional leaders should play an important role in denouncing the link between them that is being promoted by extremists.

Fifthly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime plays a major role in the General Assembly — and should play an even greater role — on the issue of human trafficking. All financial resources should be made available to the Office in order to enable it to discharge its task.

Egypt stresses its full support for the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is the governing framework for international cooperation in this regard, not only for States but also for civil society and the private sector. Egypt is looking forward to a robust outcome document from the second review of the Plan of Action next October. The Egyptian delegation will actively engage in this review process.