

Mrs. Hambisa (Ethiopia):

Allow me, first of all, to express my appreciation to the presidency of the United Kingdom for organizing this high-level debate on trafficking in persons in conflict situations. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Guterres and the other briefers for their presentations on the theme of our debate today.

Ethiopia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

It is only appropriate that we are discussing this important issue at a time when the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women is taking place here at Headquarters. It is indeed women, children and refugees who are the most vulnerable victims of human trafficking in conflict situations. As the concept note (S/2017/198, annex) rightly points out, this scourge is imposed on women and children through early and forced marriage, exploitative domestic work, sexual violence and other similar practices.

Whether it is Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Qaida in the Maghreb or Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Da'esh in Syria and Iraq, various criminal networks and terrorist groups are, without any doubt, involved in this transnational organized crime. Many Africans, including women and children escaping from persecution and/or searching for a better life in Europe and the Middle East, are falling victims to those terrorists and criminals. Kidnapping for ransom has become a typical means of exploitation, and some of these terrorists and criminals are becoming more and more adept at using the latest information and communication technologies, including mobile money-transfer systems, in order to collect ransoms and coordinate their criminal activities.

The gruesome stories of the victims and their trauma, torture and death at the hands of these terrorists and criminals are a stark reminder to us of the need to address this challenge individually and collectively. Putting in place the right policy, legislative and institutional framework at the national level and enhancing awareness of human trafficking and victim protection and assistance is absolutely imperative. It is in this context that we in Ethiopia have been trying to take various measures to prevent and fight trafficking in persons, including by ratifying relevant legal frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Aside from what each of us can and must do at the national level, however, there is certainly a need to enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination regarding the identification of, assistance to and the protection, repatriation and reintegration of victims of human trafficking. That is why, for instance, instruments such as the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children, agreed between the African Union and the European Union, are important. We also take note of the cooperation at the subregional level, such as through the Khartoum and Rabat, processes to address trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of migrants.

In this regard, what we would like to highlight is the need to provide increased humanitarian and development support to refugee-hosting countries, transit countries and countries of origin in the light of the enormous challenges they face. Recent reports indicate that refugees, including unaccompanied minors, continue to engage in a dangerous secondary movement in search of a better life in Europe and elsewhere. That increases the risk of these refugees falling into the hands of terrorists, armed groups and trafficking networks. That is why the support of the international community in strengthening the protection and assistance capacities of large refugee-hosting countries, particularly in the area of the livelihoods and self-reliance of encamped and urban refugees,

is critical. The expanded use of resettlement as a tool for international protection of the most vulnerable refugees should also be encouraged.

Finally, the lack of durable solutions to internally displaced persons and refugees, particularly women and children, no doubt increases their vulnerability to trafficking in persons. Therefore, what would eventually make a big difference in the fight against trafficking in persons is addressing the root causes of conflict. It is in this context that the role of the Council becomes much more relevant and significant.