

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran):

At the outset, I would like to convey my thanks to the United Kingdom for organizing this open debate, and to the Secretary-General and the briefers for their inputs.

I align myself with the statement to be made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The nexus between conflict-related situations and human trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery and other similar practices and their cross-border dynamics have been well recognized and acknowledged by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2016/949) as a global challenge. But we all know that the global and growing phenomenon and challenge, with its acute humanitarian emergencies, is not the cause; it is just a symptom.

Underlying factors contributing to the phenomenon — particularly foreign aggression and intervention, occupation, war and protracted conflicts, political instability, terrorism, genocide and ethnic cleansing — create conditions under which millions of people become displaced in their own countries, or migrate or seek refuge overseas in a quest for safety, stability and opportunity, at the risk of becoming more vulnerable to crimes such as human trafficking, forced labour or contemporary forms of slavery. Dealing with those underlying causes is the primary responsibility of this Council, and if the Council chooses to ignore them and instead to focus on the symptoms in its debates and deliberations, it will certainly fail to address them in a proper manner.

Complex conflicts created in the Middle East and North Africa have led to the formation of many armed groups, terrorists and powerful international criminal networks and the upsurge in the exploitation of people through trafficking. Such exploitation takes many forms, including forced labour, slavery and recruitment by armed groups. Exploitation in those situations can occur because of the increased vulnerability of people fleeing conflict as a result of widespread human, material and economic losses and general erosion of the rule of law in the affected territories.

Under those circumstances, civilian populations are viewed by some armed groups as a resource or commodity to be trafficked. They are subjected to widespread targeting and killing of ethnic and religious minorities, abductions and cross-border trafficking of women and children, internally displaced and refugee women and girls, as well as forced marriages to fighters or wealthy foreigners, as in cases involving Da'esh, Boko Haram and similar terrorist and extremist groups. Those cases can emerge as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

First and foremost, we need full respect for Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations, to deal with the underlying causes of the mass influx of persons. The next step would be to reaffirm the responsibility of all Governments to safeguard and protect the rights of refugees and migrants in accordance with international and domestic laws, reinforcing existing laws against all related illegal or violent acts.

The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons is a basic document endorsed by the General Assembly. It should be fully and effectively implemented. The upcoming review of the Plan of Action later this year is a unique opportunity to analyse and evaluate that document at this critical juncture and to improve shared international efforts in and responsibility for combating trafficking in persons by all States Members of the United Nations.