

**Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein):**

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of Australia and Switzerland, as well as on behalf of my own country.

Modern slavery and human trafficking are both causes and symptoms of instability and conflicts and a threat to both development and peace and security. Trafficking in persons is a human rights violation and can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or even genocide. Modern slavery, often resulting from trafficking, exists currently on an unprecedented scale. It undermines the humanity of its victims. The Global Slavery Index estimates that 45 million people live in conditions that qualify as modern slavery, more than ever before, and in spite of the absolute prohibition of slavery under international law. Every single country is affected, which is why it is our joint responsibility to put an end to such crimes.

The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development provides us with a new platform to address those issues. Slavery and trafficking are mentioned in 3 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, an apt reflection of their cross-cutting nature. Fighting human trafficking is not just a law-enforcement challenge, it is a prerequisite for sustainable development and human rights protection. Work on that topic must therefore be pursued with resolve in the General Assembly.

Modern slavery and human trafficking represent one of the biggest human rights scandals of our time, but are also among the most lucrative business models of organized crime, as they help to fund armed conflict. Forced labour and human trafficking is a \$150 billion industry; that is more than the annual gross domestic product of 70 per cent of the States Members of the Organization. One way of combating such crimes is to follow the money — in other words, to disrupt the financial flows associated with it. The involvement of financial institutions, in particular financial intelligence units, is key in such efforts. We welcome the fact that resolution 2331 (2016) refers to the need to use existing criminal laws, including anti-money- laundering, anti-corruption and anti-bribery laws, to investigate, disrupt and dismantle trafficking networks. We are committed to exploring ways to follow up by using the expertise of our national systems.

The Council can also play an important role by addressing the protection gap in existing international response mechanisms. The humanitarian cluster system in particular does not address several key areas. Anti-trafficking strategies should be included in the planning for responses to conflict and humanitarian crises. The Council should also encourage the relevant United Nations system entities to carry out targeted information campaigns to protect civilians vulnerable to trafficking.

Modern slavery prevails with widespread impunity. An overwhelming number of cases

are never prosecuted, even though the duty to prevent and punish slavery is an erga omnes obligation of all States. That large impunity gap has created the space for human trafficking and modern slavery to thrive. There is a clear need for better cooperation among States aimed at prosecuting perpetrators of such crimes, which are often transnational. The Palermo Anti-Trafficking Protocol in particular can make an important contribution to that end, and we hope that it will be universally ratified soon. Where national judiciaries have failed, there is a clear case for involving and making use of international criminal justice — for example, the International Criminal Court. Given the universal nature of the phenomenon of modern slavery, the Court can play a dual role: creating incentives for States to investigate and prosecute, and doing so itself where the impunity gap persists.

Although human trafficking affects a cross-section of the population, some groups are more vulnerable to it than others. Sexual and gender-based violence are exacerbated in armed conflict. Trafficking in situations of armed conflict has a particular impact on women and girls. Reports from refugees and migrants arriving in Europe suggest that a vast majority of women and girls have been sexually exploited during their flight from conflict. That is something we need to keep in mind in our humanitarian response, as well as in our migration and human rights policies.

We need to strengthen our own capabilities to identify victims and exploitation in migration movements and ensure that victims receive appropriate assistance and remedy. We should also, individually and collectively, assist and protect those vulnerable to, or victimized by, human trafficking and make sure that victims in conflict are not prosecuted or punished for their experience. It is important to note that, without identification and recognition as victims, their access to reparations once transitional justice measures are taken is seriously hampered.

We wish to highlight that men and boys should be guaranteed the same access to reparations and services. Recent studies on sexual violence against men and boys suggest that they also suffer from a non-recognition of sexual violence committed against them as sexual violence. That wrong needs to be corrected.

The resolution adopted today is a good start. We welcome in particular its gender-inclusive language, but also believe that some paragraphs could have profited from further strengthening — for example, with regard to the important role played by the Financial Action Task Force and regional bodies of that type. We look forward to a consistent political commitment from the Council and remain committed ourselves to our efforts to eradicate this human tragedy.