

**Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein):**

We thank the United Kingdom for this opportunity to speak on human trafficking in conflict and on modern slavery. The prohibition of slavery is one of the very rare norms of international law applicable at all times in all places to all actors. States are under legal obligation to criminalize, investigate, prosecute and punish slavery wherever it occurs. Over 90 per cent of countries have legislation in place criminalizing human trafficking. Yet estimates suggest that 46 million people have fallen victim to modern slavery and human trafficking, and convictions for those crimes amount to a mere fraction of the total number of perpetrators. The impunity gap is glaring, in spite of the strong universal legal norm.

Resolution 2331 (2016) on trafficking in persons in conflict situations, adopted last December, was the first-ever Council resolution on the issue. It identified a correlation between human trafficking, sexual violence, armed conflict, terrorism and transnational organized crime. It also highlighted the gender-specific implications of human trafficking in conflict.

Over 70 per cent of trafficking victims are women and girls. This is why it is particularly important to explore the gender dimensions of modern slavery — which was the main topic of a ministerial-level side event organized jointly by the United Kingdom, Nigeria and Liechtenstein this past Monday. We hope to take from that event concrete actions that the international community can implement in its efforts to end and prevent slavery, particularly as it pertains to female victims.

Last June, Liechtenstein organized a two-day workshop, together with the United Kingdom Mission and the United Nations University, on ways the Security Council can address and tackle human trafficking in conflict. The resulting report identified 10 ideas for action on the part of the Security Council, some of which were reflected in both the report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in persons (S/2016/949) and resolution 2331 (2016).

One of the central conclusions was the need for a paradigm shift, meaning recognition that national criminal justice responses may need to be supported by other forms of Security Council leverage — normative, financial and technological — and the need for innovative approaches in the fight against modern slavery. Businesses using forced labour currently generate estimated annual profits of \$150 billion. One obvious innovative approach is to involve financial institutions in detecting and disrupting financial flows associated with human trafficking — to “follow the money”.

To further explore that avenue, we are organizing a two-day workshop with the United Nations University at the end of the month. It will bring together leaders from the financial sector, including financial regulators, investigators and prosecutors, and representatives of Member States and of civil society. We will discuss the nature of the financial sector’s exposure to modern slavery, human trafficking and forced labour, risks associated with that exposure and measures the financial sector can take to combat those crimes, as well as the role of different actors in protecting the financial sector against involvement in modern slavery, human trafficking and forced labour. The outcome of the workshop will be a limited set of concrete, actionable ideas and recommendations to assist the financial sector, regulators and other stakeholders in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking.

While the Council has underscored that acts or offences associated with human trafficking in conflict may constitute war crimes, it has failed to acknowledge that they may also amount to crimes against humanity. The full potential of international criminal justice needs to be exhausted if we are to be serious about eradicating slavery.

In her briefing before the Security Council in November 2016 (see S/PV.7806), International Criminal Court Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda indicated that her Office would probe the trafficking of migrants out of Libya for evidence of war crimes and/or crimes against humanity. Hundreds of thousands of migrants are being smuggled from Libya into Europe. The International Organization for Migration estimates that up to 76 per cent of them have fallen victim to practices amounting to human trafficking. Women and children usually bear the brunt of those crimes. We look forward to receiving the results of that probe and hope it will provide us with a better understanding of how and when human trafficking may amount to atrocity crimes and ways we can use the relevant tools available to us.

The upcoming report by the Secretary-General is an opportunity to broaden the approach to both the issue itself and its associated terminology. It is a cross-cutting issue relevant to all of the pillars of the United Nations and an integral part of the commitments made by Member States, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We hope that the Council will remain seized of this important issue, and we look forward to presenting the results from our efforts to combat modern slavery and human trafficking at the next open debate on the matter.