

Mr Yaakob (Malaysia):

Malaysia joins previous speakers in thanking the United Kingdom for convening this meeting. The focus on the issue of human trafficking in armed conflict, which highlights a disturbing trend that warrants strengthening international action, is indeed commendable and timely.

Allow me also to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Mr. Yuri Fedotov for their briefings and steadfast commitment to addressing the issue of human trafficking. I also wish to thank Mr. Kevin Hyland and Ms. Ilwad Elman for their harrowing and powerful testimonies. Their courage and fortitude in the face of unspeakable horrors should compel us to act and demand to be matched by the strongest resolve on the part of the international community so as to ensure that the detestable treatment that they have witnessed and others have experienced is not repeated.

Trafficking in persons is absolutely unacceptable in any context. Human trafficking entails the extrajudicial judgment that certain groups of people — be it on the basis of ethnicity, faith, gender, economic status, age or other random criteria — are inferior and can be used as a means to an end. Human traffickers treat people without dignity and negate the respect inherent to all humankind. Such twisted concepts and beliefs are especially pernicious in situations of armed conflict, where the vulnerability of civilian communities makes them prime targets for such horrendous acts.

We are currently witnessing a nightmare scenario in which non-State armed groups are actively engaging in human trafficking activities to fulfil their distorted visions of the world. Da'esh and its ilk have shown that they are capable of immense cruelty through the prevailing use of sexual violence, enslavement and the trade in women and girls for recruitment and financial purposes. In that regard, the practices of groups such as Da'esh and Boko Haram in perpetrating sexual violence, including through the trafficking of women and children, demand heightened and greater attention and responses from the Council. We wish to briefly highlight three aspects that we believe will make a real difference in tackling the scourge.

First, as with all transnational crimes, strengthening operations and coordination among Member States, as well as regional and international organizations, is imperative. In that regard, we call on Member States that have yet to ratify and implement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Additional Protocol — which prohibit trafficking in armed conflict, identify perpetrators and hold them accountable — to make information and evidence of acts of trafficking in persons and sexual violence in conflict available to the Council and channeled to the relevant Sanctions committee, including the Committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. We support integrating a focus on trafficking in persons and the use of sexual violence in armed conflict into the work of the Monitoring team of the 1267 (1999) Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, where there are clear linkages to terrorist activities.

At the same time, the crucial outreach and advocacy roles of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict must be better leveraged. The securing of commitments and action plans for parties to the conflict so as to end and prevent violations and abuses associated with trafficking in persons, including sexual violence and the recruitment and use of children, should continue to be pursued. We call for the Council's continued engagement with the special envoys, including through the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the various sanctions committees.

I would like to emphasize the need for victims and survivors of trafficking and sexual violence to be supported in returning to a secure and stable life. Women and children subjected to any violation or abuse, including trafficking and sexual violence, at the hands of Da'esh and similar groups, should be considered as victims and given access to funding and as the principal foundation for our considered action to do so as soon as possible. Given the multifaceted dimensions of trafficking in persons, including where it is associated with sexual violence and the funding of terrorist activities, it is crucial that the international community mobilize complementary legal means, where available, to investigate, disrupt and dismantle trafficking networks. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other bodies, as well as bilateral partners, in providing technical support to Member States to build law enforcement capacities.

Through our own experience as a country of destination and transit, we have learned that cooperation and coordination with neighbouring countries and the international community are essential to our common efforts to combat this ugly scourge. Malaysia, as a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), is happy that the Association has made a unified commitment to combatting and preventing trafficking in persons through the implementation of the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and its related plan of action, established in November 2015. We also appreciate the strong support for such regional-level efforts on the part of the East Asia Summit partners, as reflected in the Summit declaration adopted last September.

In maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council must better utilize its available tools to monitor trends in humanitarian assistance. In that respect, community and religious leaders are pivotal in ensuring the reintegration and rehabilitation of survivors and in eliminating the stigma that can be associated with the ordeal that they have been through. In that regard, we support continued partnership with civil society to enable survivors and communities to heal and renew.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming Malaysia's enduring resolve to combat and eradicate trafficking in persons and our equally strong commitment to continuing to work with the international community until we bring an end to those crimes against humanity.