

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*):

I wish to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to the United Kingdom presidency for choosing the topic "Trafficking in persons in conflict situations" for this debate. This topic is most timely, as today our world is experiencing an unprecedented crisis of conflicts, marked by complexity and the massive flows of people that they have generated, reaching a record level of 59.5 million people. That has significantly increased the risk of human trafficking. There is a need, therefore, to reflect together so as to seek ways and means of strengthening action on the part of the international community, not only to combat the scourge, but also, first and foremost, to promptly resolve conflicts and build lasting peace.

Trafficking in persons is one of the most heinous crimes possible and one of the phenomena most profoundly undermining the human person, as it strikes against the most precious part of the human being, namely, his or her dignity and human value. Nothing could be more humiliating than to be a victim of that scourge. The link between conflicts and trafficking in persons is clear, as indicated by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in her latest report to the Human Rights Council (A/71/303). The phenomenon develops not only during a human or natural disaster, but also as a direct consequence of humanitarian crises, although the loss of life garners greater attention.

The reason is simple. Conflicts create situations bringing vulnerability, both for affected persons through violations of their rights, as well as in terms of the loss of public institutions and essential services. Traffickers use those highly vulnerable contexts to perpetrate their despicable acts with impunity, thereby transforming those fragile places into countries of origin and transit for trafficking.

However, conflict situations are not the only causes of trafficking deserving our attention. Democracy gaps, political instability, economic, social and institutional crises, civil unrest, systematic human rights violations, corruption, impunity, the absence of the rule of law, non-compliance with election results, and the imprisonment of dissidents and political leaders all constitute a fertile breeding ground in which human trafficking can plant its roots.

The Security Council identified the issue of human trafficking as a priority. In December 2015 (see S/PV.7585), the international community heard for the first time the moving testimony and cry of alarm expressed by Ms. Nadia Murad, a survivor of exploitation and sexual slavery at the hands of Da'esh. That stirring testimony was followed by the Council's adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2015/25, which demonstrated the Council's commitment to preventing, criminalizing, investigating and prosecuting those involved in human trafficking, leading towards the reversal of that harmful trend.

Nevertheless, the Security Council must bolster its action to combat the scourge on several levels, notably through, first, improved coordination of the international community's response to crisis. That requires taking into account, from the outset, all aspects of the conflict, in particular collective, humane and responsible management of displacements. Secondly, improved political will is necessary in order to resolve conflicts and build lasting peace, taking into account the specific needs of the affected persons and victims of trafficking, with particular emphasis on socioeconomic development. Thirdly, special focus is necessary on conflict-prevention tools for the strengthening of democracy, the rule of law, justice, public services and national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. Fourthly, strengthened international cooperation is necessary so as to address the cross-border nature of the human trafficking scourge.

Mindful of the need to combat that heinous crime, Morocco has ratified all relevant international treaties, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially

Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Furthermore, Morocco has updated its legislative framework to prevent human trafficking and combat human rights violations, notably through the adoption, in June 2016, of Law 27-14 on the fight against trafficking in human beings. That law includes, inter alia, broad definitions of trafficking in human beings and the concepts of exploitation and the victim.

The law also includes sentencing and preventive measures to protect victims and convict the perpetrators, with strengthened sentencing against the perpetrators of crimes against children, pregnant women and people in fragile situations. It also contains provisions on institutional measures to combat the phenomenon, with the creation of an advisory commission reporting to the Head of Government.