

Mr. Gertze (Namibia):

Allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate the United Kingdom on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March and for bringing this important matter for deliberation before the Council.

Namibia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the observer of the African Union and by the statement that will be delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The topic under discussion is important in the general context of human rights, but more importantly, it is critical to the issue of governance as it relates to peace and security, as well as the underlying causes of human trafficking in conflict situations. The reality is that conflict situations generate human rights violations, thereby benefiting the traffickers and their political and economic backers. There is little need for me to repeat the horrors that face those exposed to trafficking and modern day slavery, as well as other forms of victimization. Besides being denuded of their human dignity, trafficked and enslaved persons are too often isolated from any potential help they may receive through multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Namibia has been independent for 27 years this month. Hitherto, we have worked hard to ensure that any kind of trafficking is addressed and stopped in its tracks. Namibia is of the view that good governance, peacebuilding and conflict prevention are essential to the deterrence of crime, trafficking or slavery in any form. Namibia therefore subscribes to the undertaking of the African Union to silence the guns on the African continent by 2020. Good governance will require not only good-neighbourliness, but also regional cooperation. It is essential that in conflict and post-conflict situations, trust is restored in law enforcement and its ability to keep populations safe.

Trafficking in persons, organized crime and terrorism have been acknowledged in General Assembly resolution 70/291 and Security Council resolution 2331 (2016). Victims of trafficking, especially women and children, are vulnerable to prostitution, forced labour, servitude, forced marriages and even the use of sexual violence as a weapon of conflict. All of those, however, are attributes to the lack of good governance.

Another important aspect of good governance and the maintenance of peace and security is to ensure that our youth and women have access to economic advantages such as education and employment. It is here that we must recognize the essential role of the Sustainable Development Goals and their role in eradicating poverty, reducing economic stressors that can lead to youth unemployment and creating the kinds of discontent that can undermine peace and security. As we build economies, we must ensure development, peace and security. In the absence of such governance systems, human beings fall between the cracks and are more vulnerable to the evils of trafficking of both human beings and commodities.

Namibia has long recognized the importance of good governance and, since its independence, has worked hard to put in place governance and security systems. We have placed safeguards in our Constitution to ensure the independence of the judiciary and legislative bodies. In addition, more recently, we have been working to ensure legislation to protect victims of crime as well as of whistle-blowers. Moreover, Namibia's national development plan rests on four pillars. One of them is to promote good governance through effective institutions.

The Security Council has to remain steadfast in its mandate to uphold and ensure world peace and stability. Those who are trafficked or are vulnerable to the crime of trafficking, particularly in conflict situations, depend on the Council to act decisively on matters brought to its attention in that regard.

As we all know, trafficking in persons is not always a visible problem. Often, victims or potential victims have been threatened into remaining silent. Therefore, Namibia believes that using the guiding principles of the women and peace and security agenda can also enhance the effectiveness of the Security Council and the whole United Nations system in its coordinated efforts in tackling trafficking in persons, forced labour and modern slavery. The global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), for instance, has shown that women peacekeepers elicit positive responses from victims of sexual exploitation, rape, forced marriage and even trafficking. The United Nations systems should therefore work to ensure the inclusion of women peacekeepers and improve victim access to them.

Namibia has also been a strong proponent of female negotiators in conflict resolution. In that regard, the Council can play an essential role by insisting that delegations are gender-balanced. In that context, we commend Secretary-General Guterres for his strong and consistent appeal for Member States to include more women in United Nations missions.

Finally, I assure you, Mr. President, of Namibia's firm and continued support for addressing issues of peace and security as they relate to human trafficking, forced labour, slavery and other similar practices.