

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands):

At the outset, let me, like other speakers, thank the British presidency for this debate on an important and complex topic.

In view of the importance that Aruba, one of the four countries in our kingdom, attaches to the fight against human trafficking and modern slavery, let me acknowledge the presence in my delegation of Minister Hooyboer-Winklaar, Minister for Education and Family Policy in the Government of Aruba and Head of the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Commission on the Status of Women.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, we support the statement made by the representative of Italy, also in the context of our split term in the Security Council in 2017 and 2018.

There is an obvious need for the Council to address the issue of human trafficking in conflict, as it clearly undermines international peace and security. I shall focus on three issues in that regard: prevention, protection and prosecution. Let me start with prevention.

National responsibility and international cooperation are key to an effective preventive approach to human trafficking. This requires at least three things. First of all, we need more in-depth analysis and greater information-sharing to understand how criminal networks operate, because terrorist groups are increasingly engaged in human trafficking and the smuggling of people. To this end, the Netherlands promotes international cooperation between financial intelligence units.

Secondly, we need to step up our joint effort to combat the current criminal networks involved in human trafficking, for example in the area of border security. As co-Chair, together with Morocco, of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, the Netherlands is committed to placing this topic high on the agenda because greater border security also addresses cross-border human trafficking in conflict areas.

Thirdly, we believe that we should increase our vigilance. In order to strengthen the implementation of our anti-trafficking legislation and policy, in 2000 the Netherlands appointed an independent national rapporteur on trafficking in human beings with that objective especially in mind.

That brings me to my second issue, that of protection during conflict. Here, one specific area of focus should be the protection against human traffickers of vulnerable groups among refugees and internally displaced persons, especially women and children. One way to do so is by increasing the resilience of displaced persons and host communities alike. Also from that perspective, the Netherlands supports education, economic development and employment for displaced persons and host communities in the wider Syrian region and the Horn of Africa. In addition, countries should ensure that proper care is available for victims of human trafficking, including safe shelter and medical and psychological care.

Let me finally move to my third issue, prosecution after conflict. In view of the enormous human suffering traffickers cause, their impunity is simply intolerable. Together, we should join forces to investigate and hold traffickers accountable. This requires strengthening legal frameworks at the national level. These frameworks must of course be in line with international standards. The international community should continue to assist countries that lack the capacities to do so.

Capacity-building is also crucial when it comes to training national law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and lawyers. In that regard, let me commend the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for all the capacity- building it is doing worldwide to end impunity for human traffickers.

In conclusion, under the Spanish presidency the Council unanimously adopted resolutions 2331 (2016), on human trafficking in conflict. The importance of implementing the resolution and other international conventions cannot be overestimated. Together, we should redouble our efforts to cooperate to prevent human trafficking, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators. The Kingdom of the Netherlands stands ready to continue to be a partner in this endeavour.