

Mr. Bosah (Nigeria):

The Nigerian delegation thanks the delegation of the United Kingdom for organizing this open debate on “Trafficking in persons in conflict situations: forced labour, slavery and other similar practices”. We commend you, Mr. President, for the comprehensive concept note (S/2017/198, annex) provided to guide our discussions. My delegation also thanks the Secretary-General and other briefers for sharing their perspectives on this important subject.

Nigeria also associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Trafficking in persons has remained a global phenomenon affecting the most vulnerable people caught in the web of conflicts, including internally displaced persons and refugees. Terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and others, have used human trafficking, forced labour and other similar practices as weapons of terror and important sources of revenue.

The sexual exploitation of women and girls, including sexual enslavement, forced marriage and forced prostitution are among the grave factors underpinning human trafficking during and in the wake of conflicts. Such exploitation is used by extremist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), Boko Haram and their affiliates to generate revenue, as well as reward and retain terrorist fighters.

Today, it is estimated that more than 60 million women, children and men are fleeing conflicts, escaping wars or seeking a better life. Yet, as they make their journey, many are caught in the web of human trafficking and being coerced into slavery and other forms of exploitation. Having realized the deleterious effects of this phenomenon, it is gratifying to note that we are all united in our conviction to overcome the evil of trafficking in persons, through effective international cooperation.

Nigeria recognizes the urgent need for the international community to fight trafficking and to take the necessary steps to block financial flows between and among terrorist organizations. It is pertinent that Member States of the United Nations undertake investigations and prosecute cases of human trafficking perpetrated by their nationals. Nigeria considers it imperative that all perpetrators should be brought to justice through concerted international response necessary for resolving the challenge of human trafficking. Having established that most victims of trafficking are women and girls, it is only appropriate for our responses to include special attention to their rights. Furthermore, Member States must also adopt gender-sensitive and rights-based migration policies in this regard.

The fight against human trafficking has remained an issue of national priority for the Government of Nigeria. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, which is the principal institution charged with the responsibility of leading this fight, has provided an effective and comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, persecution and punishment of crimes of human trafficking. The Agency, with the active collaboration of international partners, has made very significant contributions to the fight against trafficking in persons.

We appreciate the efforts of humanitarian actors that are undertaking advocacy campaigns to publicize the risks of trafficking and the tactics employed to coerce and traffic victims and what such victims could do to protect themselves. In addition to taking preventive measures, States must engage in the protection of victims. The Palermo Protocol specifically requires States to protect the human rights of victims and to provide measures for the physical, psychological and social recovery of victims of trafficking.

Nigeria recognizes the various efforts made at the international level to combat human trafficking. The unanimous adoption of resolution 2331 (2016) condemned the sale of, or trade in, persons seized by terrorist organizations and other groups for purposes of sexual slavery and exploitation and forced labour. As encapsulated in the concept note, human trafficking and modern slavery are global crimes, with a large number of displaced persons as victims. Considering the multidimensional nature of these phenomena, we believe that these crimes must be addressed both collectively and comprehensively, including by taking a close look at their root causes and drivers. We must also adopt a coherent, comprehensive and coordinated approach, while recognizing the role and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination in promoting and effectively protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals subjected to these crimes.

We must aim to enhance coherence and build alliances to confront these issues head-on. Equally critical is the need for greater responsibility sharing to provide protection to those in need. To achieve this objective, we must implement the strategy laid out in the Global Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking. With solid partnerships and a clear approach, we can ensure the criminals are brought to justice.