

Ms. Flores Herrera (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*):

I would first like to express our solidarity with the victims of yesterday's attacks in Germany, Turkey and Yemen, and to offer our sympathies and condolences to our colleagues from the Russian Federation.

I would like to welcome Mr. Mariano Rajoy Brey, President of the Government of Spain, to today's open debate and to commend his country for its commitment to bringing to this important forum subjects that are so pertinent to human rights, particularly the one under discussion today, trafficking in persons, on which the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2331 (2016) this morning. We also thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their important contributions and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, for her thematic report (A/71/303), aimed at raising the international community's awareness of the forms and nature of trafficking in persons in situations of conflict and particularly its effects on women and children. Ms. Nadia Murad Basee Taha, the Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, is a living example of that.

Panama fully supports international actions based on the commitment of the Palermo Protocol supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which, in defining trafficking in persons, provides us with a common basis for preventing it, punishing offenders and taking measures to protect its victims, with a view to dealing with the challenges that this particular kind of organized crime poses for us.

Conscious of its vulnerabilities as a transit route and migration destination, Panama now has a cross-cutting national commission against trafficking in persons that has authority to act in the various different areas where victims need help. We have also worked to make the changes needed to update our legislation so that it can work more effectively to prevent, punish and eradicate trafficking in persons. In November, President Varela Rodríguez renewed Panama's firm commitment to combating what we term modern slavery, which includes human trafficking, after our ratification of the 2014 Protocol of the Forced Labour Convention. It is unthinkable that in the twenty-first century more than 20 million people are victims of this scourge — often double victims, at the mercy of both organized crime and drug trafficking.

The work of international agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organization for Migration is no less important. Their support to States in drafting legislation, building national strategies and assisting with resources for implementing them is very valuable and increasingly necessary. UNODC's Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking, launched in March 2009, has made a positive contribution to raising awareness, encouraging participation and

inspiring action.

One of the significant challenges to prosecuting and punishing this crime is the collection of data and evidence, on which we can share best practices with the goal of defeating this increasingly worrying reality that connects us across our borders. Our national commission has reported that in the past two years Panama has dismantled 13 human trafficking organizations, rescued 121 victims and detained 20 traffickers. In addition to strengthening institutions in order to combat trafficking and improving coordination between Government agencies that deal with trafficking, Panama has also conducted awareness-raising and prevention activities, including seminars, workshops for officials and journalists and debates with experts.

Panama believes that the United Nations has a critical role to play in the prevention and ultimate elimination of trafficking. We recommend strengthening the joint work of the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, for example, using tools such as the Universal Periodic Review to monitor the implementation of the legal framework for the prevention, treatment and elimination of trafficking in persons in armed conflict.

Finally, it is also timely for us to review preventive action in keeping with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our country is one of the 40 countries that next year will submit its voluntary national review in the framework of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, a platform that we consider essential in reporting not only on human trafficking, but also on human slavery in conflict and post-conflict situations affecting women, children and other minorities.