

Mrs. Marcelino (Portugal):

I would like to thank the United Kingdom presidency of the Security Council for convening this ministerial open debate on trafficking in human beings and for following up on the debate organized last year by Spain. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, the United Kingdom's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Mr. Kevin Hyland, and Ms. Ilwad Elman for their comprehensive briefings.

Portugal aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union.

Trafficking in human beings is an offence to the dignity and integrity of the human being and is one of the most serious violations of human rights. Every year, millions of men, women and children are victims of being trafficked for various kinds of abuses and exploitation.

It is a complex reality, often involving transnational organized criminal networks that prey on the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of trafficked persons. Trafficking in human beings is often exacerbated in situations of conflict and humanitarian crisis and is aggravated by factors such as poverty, gender inequality, unemployment, weak rule of law and poor governance. All that renders those caught in the crossfire disproportionately vulnerable to trafficking.

We note with concern the increasing trend of trafficking in persons, particularly women and girls, in situations of conflict-related sexual violence used as a tactic of war by violent extremist groups.

To be effective, any intervention must be based on common and well-coordinated efforts. Bilateral, regional and international comprehensive cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination, including effective information-sharing, is crucial to addressing human trafficking resulting from conflict. This is a global issue that demands collective action.

The crime of trafficking in persons is generally under-recorded and under-reported. We must fight the culture of impunity for those who commit those crimes; the responsible must be held accountable and brought to justice. Portugal urges all States that have not yet done so to accede to and ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. My delegation looks forward to the high-level review of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, later this year.

Portugal has made significant efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings through the implementation of several national plans on human trafficking, developed with cross-sectoral involvement including the private sector and civil society organizations.

In 2008, Portugal created the Trafficking in Human Beings Observatory to collect and analyse data on trafficking. The third national plan against trafficking in human beings (2014-2017), currently being implemented, contains 53 policy measures. The third national plan against trafficking in human beings reflects my country's commitments, in particular within the framework of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries.

The efforts made by Portugal in combating trafficking in human beings have been recognized in several international forums, most recently by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of Europe.

To conclude, in brief, trafficking in human beings is one of the most heinous crimes against human dignity. Preventing it and punishing the perpetrators and all those involved is critical to ensuring

dignity and freedom for all, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with our collective efforts towards the consolidation of peace and security.