

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea):

I join the previous speakers in commending your initiative, Sir, to convene this important debate on human trafficking in conflict situations.

Human trafficking is an issue not only of human rights but of peace and security, as well. Given its close connection to corruption, organized crime and terrorism, the devastating impact of human trafficking on peace and security cannot be overly emphasized. While conflicts generate an environment conducive to human trafficking, human trafficking itself is also a factor that exacerbates conflicts. That is further compounded by the fact that vulnerable groups such as women, children, refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons are the most susceptible to human trafficking in conflict situations. Indeed, violent extremist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram, not only employ sexual violence as a weapon of war, but also strategically use human trafficking to recruit terrorist fighters, including child soldiers, and finance war and terror. In short, those groups exploit the trafficking of vulnerable populations as a means to strengthen and expand their power and influence. Furthermore, human trafficking is inherently transnational in nature, occurring in every corner of the world and affecting developing and developed countries alike.

Taking all of those factors into consideration, I would like to highlight the following three points in our discussions on the ways to combat human trafficking in conflict situations.

First, all Member States, especially those directly or indirectly engaged in or affected by conflicts, must work together to fight against human trafficking in conflict situations. Given its transnational nature, human trafficking cannot be effectively addressed by conflict-affected countries alone. Moreover, in coping with that crime, due diligence should be exercised to uphold the principles enshrined in all the relevant human rights conventions and Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2331 (2016).

Secondly, a coordinated approach is essential. Those international agencies addressing the criminal aspect of human trafficking, such as INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and those dealing with the human rights and humanitarian issues, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, should work closely together through coordinated responses and strategies so as to strengthen synergies.

Thirdly, with a view to finding effective and sustainable solutions to human trafficking in conflict situations, maximum efforts should be undertaken to protect and support victims and hold perpetrators accountable. Campaigns to raise public awareness of the serious consequences of human trafficking should also be stepped up through the concerted efforts of the international community. For its part, in recent years, the Republic of Korea has taken concrete measures to strengthen its institutional basis to combat human trafficking both domestically and internationally. We not only codified human trafficking as a serious crime into our national legal system in 2013, but also ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children in 2015.

At the same time, as the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) this year, Korea, I believe, has a role to play in coping with that issue in the context of sustaining peace. The PBC, in fact, has been deliberating on the importance of regional approaches and collective efforts in addressing such cross-border challenges, especially in places like the Sahel region in Africa. Furthermore, women and youth, the most vulnerable groups to human trafficking, are also high on the agenda of the PBC. This year, the PBC will further deliberate on the empowerment of those groups so that they can better

contribute to the peacebuilding process, and I hope that such discussions will add greater momentum to addressing human trafficking in the broader context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

I simply cannot speak about human trafficking in the Chamber today without recalling my compatriots who are suffering from that heinous crime, albeit in a somewhat different context. Even as I speak, North Koreans who have escaped their country in search of freedom are exposed to the danger of falling victims to human trafficking. Indeed, there is no peace and security without human rights, and without peace and security there are no human rights. That is all the more reason why the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to eradicating global human trafficking in conflict situations and other circumstances. I can assure you, Sir, of our commitment to playing our due role in achieving that collective goal.