

Ms. Montserrat (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*):

I would like to thank everyone for their insightful contributions and their commitment to combating the trafficking in persons. Putting an end to the trafficking in persons in general and in conflict situations in particular goes beyond the efforts of one specific region or country. It requires the efforts of all. As the President of the Government of Spain stated here at the Security Council in December 2016 (see S/PV.7847), the trafficking in persons is the commercialization of the bodies and the dignity of the human being and a reincarnation of slavery in the midst of the twenty-first century.

When Spain convened an open debate on this very topic last December and put forward the first Security Council resolution on the trafficking of persons in conflict situations (resolution 2331 (2016)), it did so on the basis that national justice systems can crumble in conflict situations, making action by the Security Council necessary in such circumstances. With today's debate, we are contributing to the development of a counter narrative to oppose those criminal networks, armed groups and terrorist groups that use trafficking in persons in conflict situations as a form of financing and as a recruitment tool or forced labour, which prolong conflicts.

Resolution 2331 (2016), put forward by Spain here at the Security Council, strengthens the legal framework in various areas, including with regard to sanctions, accountability, financial flows, and protection and assistance to victims, paying special attention to women and girls, especially when trafficked for sexual exploitation — and without forgetting that men and boys are also victims of trafficking.

Trafficking in persons in conflict situations has sparked immense media interest, particularly when it is used by terrorists groups such as Da'esh, Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab. Nonetheless, civil society has reiterated on numerous occasions that the response of the United Nations remains fragmented. That is why I would like to highlight the fact that our States are gathered today because an open debate was convened by the United Kingdom as President of the Security Council. I would therefore like to thank the United Kingdom for the opportunity to address a subject of this magnitude. In that regard, I would like to congratulate our neighbours, the United Kingdom, for the recent establishment of the Group of Friends on Modern-day Slavery, which will surely continue to contribute to the joint efforts of all countries.

Let me now focus on three specific issues.

First, more information and coordination are required with regard to the use of trafficking in persons by armed groups in conflict situations. We must work together with all stakeholders. In that way, we could paint as detailed a picture as possible of the routes or hotspots of a conflict in which there are signs of trafficking in persons in all its forms. The findings would set out the road map of practical measures that should be adopted.

Secondly, above and beyond the Security Council, all Member States must respond to trafficking in persons in conflict situations in a coordinated and consistent manner, both through cooperation among our intelligence, police and justice units, and with the private sector and civil society, as well as within the United Nations framework. It is crucial to pay special attention to the source of financing for trafficking. A good way to address the scourge in all its complexity is through national plans and legislation. At the end of 2015, Spain adopted a comprehensive national plan to combat trafficking in persons, which strengthens coordination in all areas. Spain is committed to the fight against trafficking in persons and sexual slavery.

Thirdly and lastly, I would like to highlight the fact that victims must be the focus of any policy we develop to combat the trafficking in persons in conflict situations, in terms of both assistance and accountability. In that regard, Spain will support any initiative that promotes the preservation of the proof that would make accountability possible.

The next five years is a historic opportunity for the fight against one of the worst forms of exploitation and slavery to be at the centre of the priorities of the United Nations. Spain is committed, and every one of us here is aware of the path and the direction that we must take. All that is left for us to do is to agree on the effective practical measures to be taken, and that is within everyone's reach. Let us work together.