

Mr. Begeç (Turkey):

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her briefing. Let me also congratulate Ms. Pramila Patten on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. I wish her success in her endeavours and take this opportunity to assure her of Turkey's firm support for her mandate. We also commend the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The severe effects of the conflicts in various regions today, especially on women and girls, continue to constitute a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, the annual report (S/2017/249) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence once again reveals a daunting picture. The current trends and emerging concerns pertaining to the increased use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and terrorism require a robust international response. We welcome and support the Secretary-General's strong emphasis on the importance of prevention. We also agree with his approach that preventing sexual violence is an integral part of wider conflict prevention.

When used or commissioned as a tactic of war or as a systematic attack against a civilian population, sexual violence significantly aggravates the severe effects of an armed conflict. Perpetrators continue to employ sexual violence, mostly combined with other crimes, such as killing, forced displacement, arbitrary detention and torture. In fact, the nexus between conflict-related sexual violence and terrorism, human trafficking and organized crime has become more pertinent than ever.

With that in mind, the despicable acts perpetrated against women and girls by terrorist organizations, such as Da'esh and Boko Haram, deserve every condemnation. The use of sexual violence, including the sale and trade of women and girls, as a tactic of terror by Da'esh in Iraq and Syria reflects the appalling nature of that terrorist organization. While Turkey continues to fight against Da'esh with all its means, we believe that it is high time for the international community to act in unity for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to eliminate the root causes of this menace.

Although in a different context, it is also befitting to underline that the terrorist organization the Kurdistan Workers' Party/Democratic Union Party (PKK/PYD) likewise resorts to abuse and exploitation of women and children. The terrorist leadership of the PKK/PYD is known to commit sexual violence and abuse, even towards its female recruits. That includes rape, forced pregnancy and abortion and the carrying out of sexual-abuse related executions.

We are witnessing new complexities around the nature of conflicts. The increasing number of protracted conflicts, forced displacement and humanitarian emergencies create an environment conducive to the trafficking of women and girls. Trafficking often involves sexual violence and exploitation. Turkey attaches the utmost importance to the fight against human trafficking, which constitutes a violation of human rights and an offence to the dignity and the integrity of the human being. In that regard, we recall the importance of resolution 2331 (2016), which Turkey co-sponsored.

As the crisis in Syria enters its seventh year, sexual violence continues to be used by various parties as a systematic tactic of warfare, terrorism and torture. Millions of Syrians, particularly women and girls, continue to live under the threat of sexual violence. The horrific acts of sexual violence perpetrated in the detention facilities run by the Syrian regime have been documented in various United Nations reports. In that context, Turkey's efforts pertaining to the release of detainees and prisoners by the conflicting parties within the framework of the Astana talks are all the more relevant.

Furthermore, as a neighbouring country, we continue to follow an open door policy with regard to Syrians fleeing war and violence in their own country — there are now over 3 million Syrians living in Turkey. Empowering and ensuring self-reliance, notably of Syrian women and youth, without any bearing of sexual and gender-based violence, is of crucial importance for us. That is why we exert every effort to provide security and safety for them. Last but not least, I would like to underline that Turkey attaches the utmost importance to strengthening the efforts aimed at implementing the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. In that regard, we commend and support the Secretary-General's efforts towards making zero tolerance a reality.