

Ms. Kaya (Turkey):

We thank the United Kingdom for organizing today's debate and the Secretary-General and the distinguished briefers for their statements. We find this open debate timely and relevant, following the adoption of the first Security Council resolution on this topic (resolution 2331 (2016)), which Turkey co-sponsored in December 2016.

Human trafficking constitutes a violation of human rights and an offence to the dignity and integrity of human beings. It is rightly described as modern-day slavery. It is also a serious transnational organized crime, which has immense costs on the social and economic fabric of our societies. Due to its geographical location, Turkey has been adversely affected by the rising trends in human trafficking and related criminal practices. In the crises in our region, criminal and terrorist networks resort to different forms of exploitation of human beings and commit gender-based sexual violence and the forced recruitment of adults and children to fund and sustain their operations.

Speakers before me have recalled how terrorist organizations such as Da'esh, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab resort to human trafficking for forced labour and enslavement. It is also important to emphasize that the terrorist organization of the Kurdistan Workers' Party and the Democratic Union Party (PKK/PYD) also widely employs methods that exploit human beings, particularly through the forced recruitment of children and young women. Turkey is actively combating terrorist organizations such as Da'esh and the PKK/PYD, and we support our partners in similar efforts. In doing so, we recognize that we must address the vulnerabilities of victims trapped in conflicts and ensure accountability for the perpetrators.

Turkey remains strongly committed to eradicating human trafficking through a progressive approach. In that regard, we have introduced administrative and legal measures that aim to combat the problem through prevention, protection, prosecution, and cooperation. At the international level, Turkey is a party to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its relevant supplementary protocols. At the regional level, since February 2016 Turkey has been party to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. We participate in the related activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and engage bilaterally with States in Eurasia.

At the domestic level, our efforts are focused on strengthening our legislation and improving the implementation of our obligations. In 2002, we formed a national task force for combating human trafficking and since then have developed and implemented two national action plans, designed to implement international standards in the fight against human trafficking, eradicate that scourge in Turkey and strengthen our institutions. More recently, in March 2016, we issued a regulation on combating human trafficking and protecting its victims, for which we have established a Department for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking, tasked with its effective implementation. The Department is responsible for conducting projects with a diverse group of stakeholders. In that regard, we have put in place initiatives such as a multilingual 157 helpline and programmes for victim support and voluntary safe return.

Human trafficking cannot be prevented by Governments acting individually. We should recalibrate and coordinate our ongoing efforts in line with the commitments that we agreed to under the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (General Assembly resolution 71/1). As the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the world, including more than 3.2 million Syrians and Iraqis, Turkey will continue to take measures necessary to prevent the human trafficking, forced labour and enslavement of those who have already fled the horrors of conflict.

