

Mrs. Haley (United States of America):

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for raising this important issue, and the Secretary-General, Mr. Hyland, Mr. Fedotov and Ms. Elman for their briefings and forceful calls to end all forms of modern slavery. The United States appreciates all of the work they have done to help move us towards that goal.

Rama was looking for a better life. A young woman in war-torn Syria, Rama was working in a café when a man offered her a restaurant job in Lebanon with a much higher salary. She jumped at the opportunity, but instead of taking her to the well-paying job he had promised, the man took Rama to a run-down brothel in a slum. Over the next nine months, she was beaten and forced into prostitution, one of as many as 75 women caught up in one of Lebanon's largest sex-trafficking rings. As Rama told a reporter,

"We slept where we worked ... The windows were painted black. We couldn't see the light or breathe the air outside."

Describing her captor, the ringleader of the trafficking operation, she said, "It's not that he made us feel like slaves. We were actual slaves ... He beat me until I surrendered".

Rama eventually escaped that horror, but she is physically and emotionally shattered.

And Rama is not alone. Sadly, her experience is far more common than most of us realize. An estimated 21 million people in more than 106 countries, including countless children, have been reported trapped in modern slavery. That is more than the population of Romania. Those are people living in some of the most horrifying conditions imaginable. We see children forced to make bricks in Peru, or disentangle fishing nets in Ghana, or who are sold into prostitution in South- East Asia. We see men held captive on fishing boats off the coast of Thailand, and women trapped as domestic workers in the Persian Gulf. No country is immune to this crisis, and that includes the United States, where, despite our efforts to combat human trafficking, too many people are still falling victim to criminals who force them into prostitution or other types of work, with no pay and no way out.

This is not just an issue of human dignity, it can also be one of peace and security. The groups responsible for human trafficking are all too often the same ones that send weapons and narcotics across our borders, or they are terrorist organizations that finance their attacks by smuggling desperate people. According to the non-governmental organization Human Rights First, traffickers earn an estimated \$150 billion every year. That is big money, and it is money that frequently ends up supporting illegal activities that we all want to stop. And the problem is only getting harder to solve. Today, criminal gangs take advantage of technology to prey on people, putting fake job ads online and reaching out on social media to lure people into trafficking rings. When criminals want to sell the people they have enslaved, they can again turn to the Internet to find buyers more easily and with less risk of detection. Law enforcement often lacks the resources and training to enable it to penetrate such online networks and find the people who need help.

We must do better. Standing up to modern slavery and forced labour is a core element of foreign policy. It demonstrates our unwavering commitment to human rights and to the fact that all people, regardless of where they come from, have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That is why, each year, the United States Department of State produces a dedicated report on trafficking in persons, along with an annual human rights report, the latest of which has just been released. Both reports reflect our ongoing commitment to advancing human dignity. I would urge everyone here to read them and act on their recommendations for helping to promote accountability for violations and abuses. A few weeks ago, President Trump made it clear that his Administration will focus on ending

the horrific practice of human trafficking. Our Government already has many people working on the problem, but we will be devoting even more resources to the fight.

There are many proposals out there on how we can help. Our briefers have already discussed several important initiatives, including some within the United Nations system, but I want to focus on just one new effort. In the coming weeks, the Department of State will launch an open and competitive process to fund transformational projects aimed at reducing the prevalence of modern slavery under a new initiative, the Program to End Modern Slavery, which was recently signed into law, thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of United States Senator Bob Corker. The initiative will seek to raise \$1.5 billion to help countries break trafficking rings and support survivors. The funding will come partly from the United States Government, but unlike most assistance programmes, it will seek to raise most of its money from partners in foreign Governments and the private sector. That is important, because ending modern slavery must be a collective effort. The new initiative will also spend its money on programmes that show results. Groups that receive funding must set measurable goals and target a 50 per cent reduction in modern slavery for the population they will be working with. The United States will lead in rallying donors to that new effort and identifying innovative programmes that do the most good.

We cannot forget that when we help people trapped in modern slavery, we help restore human potential. At the State Department, for example, we now have an advisory council on human trafficking, with 11 members who help advise the federal Government on improving anti-trafficking policies. Some of them manage businesses, while others work in law firms or have founded non-governmental organizations. But what all 11 of them have in common is that they themselves are survivors of human trafficking. They now dedicate their time and energy to keeping others from suffering. Their stories are a testament to what every man, woman and child can achieve when they escape the exploitation of modern slavery. We should give all who are trapped the chance to live their lives and live up to their potential. The United States is determined to join with other Member States in order to make those efforts successful.