

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*):

First of all, I would like to reiterate our expressions of solidarity and condolences to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation following the brutal assassination of their Ambassador, Andrey Karlov, yesterday in Turkey. We call for an end to hate speech against the Russian Federation regarding the situation in the Middle East.

We are honoured by your presence, Sir, Mr. Mariano Rajoy Brey, as President of the Government of Spain, at this important open debate. This is the final debate in which we will participate as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. We also wish to express our warmest congratulations for the work of your Ambassador, Sir, Mr. Román Oyarzun Marchesi, who, along with the Spanish team, has done excellent work during your membership of the Security Council.

We also appreciate the briefings given by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Mr. Yury Fedotov and Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura. We especially wish to thank Ms. Ameena Saeed Hasan and Ms. Nadia Murad Basee Taha for their courage and for reminding us once again today of the consequences and trauma experienced by victims of war and terrorism, in this case in one of its most perverse forms: trafficking in persons and sexual violence.

Venezuela furthermore wishes to align itself with the statement to be delivered by the delegation of the Kingdom of Bahrain on behalf of the Group of Friends against Trafficking in Persons.

The information provided by today's briefers and Nadia Murad Basee Taha's wrenching testimony in particular could not have been more eloquent or revealing. Her sad experience regarding the murder of her family and the situation in her village demonstrate the brutal nature of the war taking place in the Middle East.

It is unacceptable to us that human beings are used by criminal and terrorist groups as spoils of war. We are witnessing a tragedy that is being experienced by thousands of people, especially women and children. In addition to the horrors of armed conflict, they are victims of trafficking and sexual violence: crimes that attack human dignity in the most perverse of ways and, depending on the circumstances, constitute flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and international conventions on human rights and on transnational organized crime.

Trafficking in persons is a transnational crime from which no country is exempt. Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight that the reasons for and causes that promote this type of crime — and the fact that extremist and terrorist groups use trafficking in persons and sexual violence as part of their strategic goals and to finance their criminal activities — have been exacerbated in recent years due to situations of armed conflict in various regions of the world, such as the Middle East and North Africa, and in particular in Iraq, Syria, Libya and the Sahel. In the case of the latter, due to the destruction of the social fabric of the Sahel region of Africa, terrorism has been spread throughout the Lake Chad basin by groups such as Boko Haram, which operate in various countries.

In the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2014, it was acknowledged that, prior to the year 2011, when the Syrian conflict began, it was very rare to identify victims of trafficking of Syrian nationality. In the briefing given by Mr. Fedotov a year ago he stated that since the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant began its uprising in the north of the country, victims of trafficking from Iraq and Syria have been more frequently identified in various parts of the world.

The report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in armed conflicts (S/2016/361) highlighted the

fact that in the past two years sexual violence has been increasingly linked to the strategic, ideological and financial objectives of extremist and terrorist groups. Venezuela recognizes that trafficking in persons and sexual violence are being used by some extremist and terrorist groups as a terror tactic and also to finance this scourge. Moreover, the enslavement and trafficking of women and children demonstrates their absolute disregard towards women and their intolerance and hatred of other races, cultures and religions. It is the clearest sign of the brutal and despicable nature of those extremist groups, which will have to be brought to justice.

All the information we have available to us clearly points to the fact that the training, equipping and promotion of non-State actors, whose actions are based on violent extremism, are aimed at promoting the break-up of States for political reasons and the creation of such groups as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, the Al-Nusra Front and the Army of Conquerors. They also facilitate the commission of various atrocities, war crimes and crimes against humanity against the population, in particular against the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children.

In that regard, we once again demand that all actors in the international community prevent those kinds of crimes. The best way to do that is to fully respect the standards and provisions of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly relating to the prohibition on providing weapons and financial and logistical support to such non-State violent groups, who often become terrorist groups. That way we can effectively decrease their operational capacity and, consequently, reduce the number of various crimes related to trafficking in persons and sexual violence. Ending trafficking in persons and sexual violence in armed conflicts means being fully committed to resolving armed conflicts wherever such crimes occur.

While we need to confront the criminal mafias that engage in human trafficking and take advantage of the tragedy of millions of human beings, we must also act in a coherent political and moral way, without encouraging armed conflicts that are based on economic and geopolitical interests. In that way, we can avoid the tragic consequences that we want to eradicate today, but which were not given due consideration when some countries irresponsibly supported military aggression in Iraq, Libya and now in Syria. In the Security Council we need to expend a huge effort to put a stop and to rectify the irreparable suffering of millions of people and the destruction of entire societies.

We believe that accountability is one of the most important aspects related to the prevention of this kind of crime. We cannot accept impunity for this kind of crime. Venezuela is in favour of effective accountability for all forms of sexual violence. Exemplary sanctions should be applied to all instigators and perpetrators of those crimes, including the adoption of targeted sanctions, in accordance with the mechanisms established by the Security Council. Just as important is the establishment and the scaling-up of national institutional capacities related to justice, health care and social welfare systems in countries in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict, so that, while fully respecting the sovereignty of the States concerned, we can develop and build their capacities with the goal of providing due attention to the victims.

We believe that we have sound legal instruments at hand that could make it possible for us to combat the crime of trafficking in human beings and also to cover situations of armed conflict. An example is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. That is an instrument that has almost reached universal membership. We also have the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, including provisions pertaining to examining this problem in situations of conflict. In 2017, there will be a full review of that Plan of Action. It will be an ideal opportunity to strengthen the Plan and to address the challenges that we are currently dealing with.

Resolution 2332 (2016), adopted today by consensus in the Security Council, is an extraordinary and concrete contribution by the Security Council on this topic for those situations of armed conflict that we were discussing. Also, it clearly points to the need to have better strategic coordination of efforts in order to prevent trafficking in persons and sexual violence and also to confront it, in line with efforts to combat violent extremism, which could lead to terrorism.

In addition, I would like to add that the nature of both crimes and the measures aimed at their effective prevention and eradication in the context of armed conflict also requires forms of broadened democratic discussion that ensures the full participation of Member

States, with the goal of coordinating and establishing synergies together with the various entities of the United Nations that have a remit in that area and with different regional and subregional mechanisms.

To conclude, Venezuela would like to reiterate its commitment to contribute to strengthening the institutional, administrative and judicial instruments that are key in the fight to eradicate those horrendous and barbaric crimes against humanity, which are an affront to civilization and to the modern world. They are a pressing responsibility for the Organization if we want to see its noble purposes and principles become a reality.