

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan):

At the outset, I would like to thank the presidency for convening this open ministerial debate and for submitting a concept note on the topic (S/2017/198, annex).

We are also grateful to Secretary-General António Guterres and the other briefers for their statements.

The exploitation of people through trafficking, including forced labour, slavery and recruitment by armed groups, is a serious abuse of human rights, while certain acts associated with trafficking persons in the context of armed conflict may amount to war crimes. Azerbaijan strongly condemns all acts of trafficking in persons and is combatting such acts and other similar practices. We share the concern over the scale and number of challenges, which have recently deteriorated due to increased violence, terrorist activities and humanitarian crises.

The international legal framework for combatting human trafficking is based on the rules operating within the relevant branches of international law that ensure protection in all situations, including armed conflict. Success in fighting criminal activities during conflicts, including human trafficking and similar practices, requires first and foremost a strong commitment to binding obligations and standards. It is critically important to ensure the full and effective implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular those relating to conflict prevention and resolution.

We note with concern the nexus between trafficking in persons, terrorism and transnational organized crime. Particular consideration must also be given to armed conflicts that are aggravated by foreign military occupation and external political, military, financial and other support to separatist regimes established in occupied territories and organized criminal networks operating in such areas. Efforts to bring unlawful situations to an end and to disrupt and dismantle the networks involved must be a priority.

Among the issues requiring attention in the context of human trafficking, forced labour, modern slavery, organ removal and other similar practices is that of civilians, including women and children, taken hostage or reported missing in connection with armed conflict. Azerbaijan continues its consistent efforts in that regard, including through the relevant biennial resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women, of which my country is a main sponsor.

The best deterrent is undoubtedly ensuring a speedy end to impunity for conflict-related violations and abuses of human rights through all available means. When national authorities fail to investigate, prosecute and convict the perpetrators, the international community should play a more proactive role. It is important that the Security Council, Member States, regional organizations, mediators and envoys in mediation, peace and preventive diplomacy processes ensure that peace and justice work together effectively.

It is also essential to emphasize the role of the relevant humanitarian mandates within the United Nations system in addressing situations of armed conflict and the importance of international law-enforcement cooperation, including with respect to the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases.