

Ms. Adamson:

I thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Hyland, Ms. Elman and Mr. Fedotov for their briefings.

I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We would like to congratulate the United Kingdom for convening this open debate and to commend its keen commitment to addressing the issue of trafficking in human beings and forced labour in conflict during its presidency of the Security Council. We have built on the momentum generated by previous presidencies to address this issue, and we look forward to the continuous commitment of the international community to addressing this scourge.

Trafficking in human beings is a grave violation or abuse of human rights and a serious form of organized crime. The prohibition on trafficking in human beings and forced labour is expressly set forth in Article 5 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Furthermore, in its new Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy, the EU has recognized the need to counter the spillover of insecurity that might originate from conflicts, ranging from trafficking and smuggling to terrorism.

We reiterate that we stand behind the commitments in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants to combat human trafficking, including through targeted measures to identify, protect and assist victims, as well as to prevent human trafficking among those affected by displacement, while taking into account the fact that women and children are in particularly vulnerable situations. We believe that it is important to strengthen multilateral cooperation and partnerships, and, in line with resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2250 (2015), we also need to engage more women and young people in both peacebuilding activities and actions against human trafficking.

We welcome the report (S/2106/949) submitted by the Secretary-General in November 2016 on the implementation of measures to counter trafficking in persons. We note with attention the nexus between conflict and trafficking in human beings, which can take, in that context, many despicable forms. We particularly note the links between conflict, trafficking in human beings and other forms of crime. Trafficking is gender-specific. The most recent EU data show that trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation continues to be the most widespread form encountered by authorities, and the majority of its victims are women and girls. Moreover, according to the same EU data, trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation affects primarily men and boys. In that respect, we call for a more gender-specific, targeted approach in all actions against trafficking in human beings.

We recall the need to focus on the prevention of trafficking in human beings in all its forms. Any other approach comes too late for the victims of that deplorable crime. In that respect, ensuring accountability for the perpetrators is essential as a deterrent. We must follow the financial trails and use all the available investigative tools and techniques to prosecute and bring to justice the perpetrators. By upholding and promoting international standards, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, and other international legal instruments, we contribute to ensuring strong foundations for the rule of law. We need to renew and invigorate our efforts to implement the existing legal architecture.

The EU has built an ambitious, gender-specific, child-sensitive and comprehensive legal and policy framework to combat trafficking in human beings. Anti-trafficking actions also form a key part of our

external policies and funding, and the EU continues to cooperate with and support United Nations agencies.

We recognize that instability creates an ideal environment for the criminal activities of traffickers. We are therefore actively supporting all United Nations-led efforts to end the political and security crises in Syria and Libya. We are also prioritizing activity in connection with counter-terrorism, working with partners throughout the world to address threats from all terrorist organizations, including those like Da'esh and Boko Haram, which have clearly and quite publicly exploited and trafficked women and girls for their own objectives. We need to understand further the links between terrorist organizations and the organized criminal groups that carry out the trafficking of people and other illicit commodities. We need to actively pursue an agenda to increase women's participation in peace processes and in encountering violent extremism so as to ensure effective measures and solutions. We must work together to do all we can to stop this multiple scourge on our societies. I have a much longer statement, but in the interest of time I will stop here. The full version of our statement has been distributed.