

Mr. Lal (India):

We thank the delegation of Spain for organizing this open debate and for sharing its informative concept note (S/2016/1031, annex). We appreciate the remarks made by the President of the Government of Spain and by the Secretary-General and the other briefers.

Trafficking in persons across borders has been a cause for concern for some time. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 55/25) and entered into force 13 years ago. That Convention and its subsequent Protocols represent important steps taken by the international community in its collective fight against transnational organized crime.

The Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which the General Assembly adopted by consensus in 2010 (resolution 64/293), further recognized the global scale of the problem and outlines the coordinated approach required to deal with it. The Plan of Action reaffirms the central role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the global efforts to deal with the issue. It also recognizes the work being carried out by other United Nations entities, such as the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Trafficking in persons is also recognized as a challenge to be overcome in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

India is a signatory to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols and has resolutely addressed various aspects concerning trafficking in persons through a series of laws and other measures. Article 23 of the Indian Constitution specifically addresses the issue. As part of the continuing efforts to strengthen the relevant legal frameworks within India, India unveiled, earlier this year, a comprehensive draft law aimed at the prevention of and protection from the trafficking in persons and the rehabilitation of trafficked persons. The draft legislation aims to unify our existing anti-trafficking laws and prioritize the needs of victims and protect them. India continues to work closely with United Nations agencies, including United Nations Women and UNODC, on related issues. India has entered into various agreements with other countries to combat such crimes. India also works closely with its neighbours to implement the 2002 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on that issue.

The nexus between organized traffickers and terrorist networks through illicit financial linkages is a dangerous phenomenon. The Secretary-General's report (S/2016/949) notes the low rates of conviction for crimes of trafficking across countries: that needs to change. The persistence of transnational organized crime in that area and its links with

terrorist networks represent a challenge that requires us to step up our efforts and use the existing tools and mechanisms to counter terrorist-financing, including sanctions regimes, more effectively in that regard.

Situations of armed conflict provide fertile ground for trafficking in persons, in particular those belonging to vulnerable groups such as women, children and refugees. They are victims of sexual slavery and forced labour, including in the mining sector or as fighters. In recent times, the heinous actions of terrorist groups, such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram, specifically target vulnerable groups, such as women and children, in situations of armed conflict as a deliberate tactic of war, adding another even more serious dimension to such crimes. Such terrorist groups continue to act with impunity.

The primary focus of the Security Council is to address threats to international peace and security. While an increased focus on addressing trafficking in persons and its linkages to terrorism and armed conflicts is timely, we must strengthen international collaboration so as to better utilize the various existing mechanisms, including through more effective coordination of the various entities of the United Nations. Those United Nations entities and mechanisms take a more holistic approach that seeks to address the legal, social and economic contexts of the problem. They provide strong legal and practical frameworks that can enable and facilitate joint responses against trafficking that involves multiple jurisdictions. Their autonomy of decision-making needs to be further strengthened.

While the Security Council should retain its focus on situations of armed conflict, the broader mechanisms should be more fully utilized to strengthen national capacity-building, including in criminal-justice capacities and regulatory frameworks in banking and financial institutions, so as to disrupt illicit financial flows and improve research and analysis, as well as regional and inter-regional cooperation for the protection of victims.

India remains committed to working with the international community in our joint endeavour to eliminate the global challenge of trafficking in persons, including in situations of armed conflict.