

Mr. Perović (Montenegro):

I would like to thank the Spanish presidency for organizing this timely open debate on trafficking in persons in conflict situations and for preparing an informative concept note (S/2016/1031, annex). Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for the manner in which you have conducted the affairs of the Council. I also thank the briefers for their input in the debate.

Montenegro welcomes the adoption today of resolution 2331 (2016) and associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like, however, to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

We have seen how ever country is affected by trafficking, whether it is a country of origin, transit or destination for the victims. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/949) and the briefings have painted a disturbing picture. We welcome the Secretary-General's report, which notes the linkages between conflict situations and trafficking in persons. It is unfortunate that women and children account for the vast majority of trafficking victims, which also include boys and men, as human traffickers target the most fragile, exhausted, desperate and vulnerable societal groups.

Human trafficking in conflict is a growing concern, particularly in the context of the current migration crisis but also due to the increased use of social media platforms and new technologies to recruit victims. Institutionalized sexual slavery and the forced recruitment of children as suicide bombers and the victims of organ traffickers have become horrifying spirals within this negative phenomenon. The use of slave by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram is not the problem of only certain countries. Like today's conflicts, the problem has become international and no region is immune.

It is unacceptable that this crime has become one of the fastest-growing activities of transnational criminal organizations, with widespread violations of human rights that are not condemned while those responsible are not held accountable, despite the efforts of the United Nations and other international bodies, Governments and civil society groups. We have to enforce the law and pursue the criminals who exploit victims in a brutal manner. This is a global threat that can be found in many conflict areas and, as such, requires a response at the national, regional and international levels.

In Montenegro, our focus has been on prevention and education, criminalizing trafficking in persons, disrupting criminal and terrorist networks and addressing related crimes. In that regard, we are working closely with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, UNICEF and the European Union.

We support international peace operations as an efficient and dynamic instrument to promote respect for human rights and build sustainable institutions in conflict areas. In today's conflicts, United Nations peacekeeping operations are more involved in protecting civilians than monitoring ceasefires. That is why peace operations should use new technologies to strengthen their intelligence-gathering capacities. In preparing Montenegrin soldiers to take part in peace operations and activities, the Government office for the fight against trafficking in human beings, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence, conducts regular trainings on the fight against human trafficking.

Montenegro strongly condemns cases of sexual exploitation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, as such criminal activity and abuse have no place under any circumstance in the United Nations flagship activity. It is our collective duty to ensure thorough investigations into those cases, as well as accountability and justice for the victims. Zero tolerance and zero impunity must prevail as our only options in order to avoid tarnishing the credibility of the United Nations once again.

Counter-trafficking activities should start at the outset of any crisis and before evidence of trafficking and exploitation appears. Increased regional and international cooperation and sharing of information are also vital to block criminals from finding safe haven. In that regard, Montenegro has signed cooperation protocols with neighbouring countries Albania and Kosovo.

At the international level, the Security Council's role is highly important, including through the sanctions regime against the Islamic State and Al-Qaida. As the Secretary-General has made clear, the trafficking of women and girls and their sexual enslavement are a source of financing for the Islamic State and a recruitment tool. Every Member State needs to play its part in updating the list of designated individuals and entities that are engaged in trafficking activities.

All victims should see an end to their suffering. They deserve protection and support, as well as justice and opportunity. We therefore need to redouble our efforts at all levels and address that pressing issue in a way that will provide real results on the ground.