

Mr. Koncke (*spoke in Spanish*):

On behalf of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS), I extend condolences to the Permanent Mission of Russia following the attack that claimed the life of Ambassador Andrey Karlov, and to the Permanent Mission of Germany following the attack carried out in Berlin.

I am honoured to take part in today's open debate in the Security Council on behalf of the Secretary General of the Organization of American States. First, I thank the Spanish presidency of the Security Council for its initiative to convene today's debate to address a topic of extreme importance and pressing urgency and that requires shared commitments, multidimensional approaches and the highest sense of political will of countries and other actors to combat and eradicate it.

We are fully confident that today's debate and the adoption of resolution 2331 (2016) will contribute decisively to the efforts of the Security Council and Member States to establish and empower judicial systems and other institutional mechanisms aimed at preventing, criminalizing, combating and eradicating this scourge, above all when it also serves as a source of funding for criminal organizations and terrorist groups in situations of armed conflict.

Human trafficking is one of the most despicable expressions of human barbarism. In the more than 50 armed conflicts plaguing the world, this crime intensifies violence and the expressions of terrorism, prolongs the suffering of its victims and delays or nullifies the development of communities. In addition, it is an ongoing violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In many cases, the underlying link between transnational organized crime and conflict situations is undeniable.

Human trafficking in our hemisphere focuses on sexual exploitation, mainly of women and girls or adolescents. In our region, regional and international routes have been identified, and in many countries, the practices used by criminal groups to capture victims have also been recognized, as well as victims' places of origin and destination. Although we now enjoy unprecedented peace in our region, thanks to the recent signing of the peace agreement achieved in Colombia, we cannot give up on the fight against the threat posed by transnational organized crime, since it is a reality that is measured in lives and victims, including those subjected to human trafficking. Let me share some of the efforts made by OAS to end this crime.

All countries of the hemisphere have committed to adhering to the terms of the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2014, Venezuela, Argentina, Guatemala and Brazil, respectively, hosted

high-level meetings on the subject, the last of which adopted the Declaration of Brasilia and the Second Work Plan against Trafficking in Persons in the Western Hemisphere 2015-2018. These constitute the framework for guiding efforts in the region.

The Work Plan takes into account the different manifestations of exploitation considered as human trafficking, and pays special attention to vulnerable, at-risk groups and indigenous populations and other traditional communities, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons groups. The mandates and guidelines of the Second Work

Plan include the establishment of mechanisms for the periodic monitoring of strategies, the criminalization of trafficking according to the seriousness of the crime, special emphasis on minors under 18 years of age, access to protection mechanisms for victims regardless of their immigration status and participation in illegal activities, and capacity-building and the strengthening of the institutional governance of countries.

Within that framework, together with the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and with funding from the European Union, since 2014 OAS has implemented the Inter-American Programme for the Prevention of Irregular Migration in Mesoamerica. The Programme covers eight countries in the region and has three complementary components: prevention, confrontation and protection.

In addition, the inter-American crime and violence prevention programme was launched in 2015. It includes the prevention of human trafficking. It is being implemented as a pilot project in Brazil and will continue in Honduras next year. Recently, the Organized Transnational Crime Department was created within the OAS General Secretariat. It seeks to address the challenges faced by the western hemisphere with regard to such crimes. The efforts made by OAS in that regard should not be viewed in isolation, but, rather, as being linked to the four strategic pillars of the organization: democracy, human rights, integrated development and multidimensional security — all under the slogan of “More rights for more people”.

A challenge in the fight against human trafficking is the existence of networks that corrupt public authority, built around criminal organizations and their links with the private sector and terrorist groups that use human trafficking as a source of financing, as acknowledged by the fourth *Global Survey of the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) by Member States*.

To conclude, I should like to share a few thoughts and suggestions based on experiences in our region.

Combating human trafficking requires a multidimensional security approach, a combination of national efforts and bilateral and multilateral measures and active cooperation with regional organizations. The legal dimension, through the classification of crimes related to human trafficking, must be a key pillar in efforts by Member States, as well as in the development of criminal classifications related to the fight against money-laundering and the financing of terrorism in order to combat human trafficking, in particular in conflict affected areas. Strengthening capacity-building is an essential tool for improving border control and management, identifying falsified documents and prosecuting trafficking networks.

I would like to conclude by expressing the full confidence of the secretariat of the OAS that today's open debate will be an essential contribution to the task of preventing, combating and eradicating the trade and trafficking in human beings, to which the organization I represent is fully committed.