

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*):

We too thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their participation in today's meeting. The problem of human trafficking in conflict situations and terrorism was discussed by the Council in December last year (see S/PV.7847). The victims of human trafficking, including women and children, annually run into the hundreds of thousands. The Security Council has repeatedly condemned the depredations of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, whose victims comprise the least protected sections of the population.

Human trafficking today remains a serious challenge in various parts of the world. It is particularly dangerous when those activities cross over into businesses controlled by organized crime. The proceeds of human trafficking are used as sources of financing for terrorism, compounding the threat to international peace and security. Crimes in that sphere are often accompanied by equally deleterious phenomena such as abduction, sexual violence and the proliferation of narcotics.

The exploitation of the victims of human trafficking take various forms, including forced labour and slavery. Today's meeting takes place on the eve of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It offers a good opportunity to once again recall the tragic consequences of that centuries-old disgraceful practice, which, even today, stands as one of the root causes of a number of contemporary conflicts.

As to the modern forms of human trafficking, we must address the root causes and take consistent measures against criminal groups. In that context, a not inconsiderable role is played by the demand for black market labour and the legalization of the sex industry in consumer countries. Effective results can be achieved only by adopting a comprehensive approach, including prevention and assistance to victims and the prosecution of criminals with the appropriate level of international cooperation, including in the sphere of legal assistance. Coordinating action within that sphere, both within and among States, should involve law-enforcement bodies, social services and non-governmental organizations that provide assistance to victims.

One of the natural partners of States should be the institution of the family. As an important instrument for sustainable development and social integration, the family reduces vulnerabilities to various challenges and threats, including those linked to the root causes of human trafficking. By strengthening the institution of the family States can minimize those risks.

Combating human trafficking is a sphere where we very much need to draw on the potential for partnering with the business community. Right now, together with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, we are making preparations to host in Moscow in 2017 a conference devoted to that very theme.

Responsibility for combating human trafficking and modern forms of slavery lies, above all, with the States themselves. They must independently define national policies and methods for eradicating the phenomenon and investigate crimes and pursue and bring to justice the perpetrators. We support initiatives aimed at consolidating efforts on the part of States, bodies of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations geared towards combating human trafficking. We participate in the financing of those activities.

We note the work of the United Nations, particularly the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in providing specialized assistance to States upon their request. We believe that such assistance must strike a balance between the needs of the countries of origin and the countries of destination alike. Today, the international community has created an entire series of mechanisms aimed at

fundamentally improving cooperation among all stakeholders in combating human trafficking. One of the most important initiatives was the creation of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, in which our delegation takes an active part. We welcome the holding in October of a high-level meeting of the General Assembly to assess progress in implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is a key yardstick for States in that domain.

As for the role of the Security Council, it must be limited only to consideration of the issue of human trafficking in conjunction with the situations on its agenda, in particular in the context of fighting terrorism, including its financing. We need to recall that in and of itself, outside of those circumstances, phenomena such as human trafficking, forced labour or slavery — as dangerous and repugnant as they are — are not directly related to the work of the Council, which bears responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Council is already dealing with a number of similar cross-cutting issues, such as children and armed conflict, sexual violence in armed conflict, and women and peace and security. Overall, we need to ensure that the work of the existing structures is as effective and complementary as possible, while respecting their purviews and the distribution of tasks among them.

In conclusion, and in response to the Ukrainian statement and its unfounded accusations against Russia, the theme of this meeting is highly relevant to that country. It would seem, by the looks of things, that they are treating people like slaves who have no rights and cannot, for instance, claim to have a national identity or use their native language. That is the attitude taken by Kyiv towards the people living in eastern Ukraine. It has tried to respond by clamping down with violence, the way slave rebellions were handled in ancient times. When that failed and despite thousands being wounded and killed as a result of the use of force by the Kyiv authorities, they then tried to stifle the residents of Donbas, using any available means, such as imposing an economic and transport blockade and stopping social-services payments, among others.

Today, the Ukrainian authorities have adopted a similar decision to fully cease transport communications with Donbas. It is no secret that after achieving independence, Ukraine has traditionally been one of the countries with the worst records in terms of human trafficking and forced labour. Now in times of conflict, such criminal activity has acquired a particularly repugnant form, manifesting itself in the exploitation of the vulnerability and lack of protection of internally displaced persons.

It is our hope that the Ukrainian authorities will address those problems by other means than attempting to place the blame on Russia, as they usually do.