

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*speak in French*):

As previous speakers have stated, in December 2016 the Council considered the issue of human trafficking in conflict situations (see S/PV.7847) and adopted resolution 2331 (2016), which strongly condemns all forms of human trafficking in areas of armed conflict.

In October, the General Assembly will hold a high-level meeting to assist action taken and ongoing challenges in the framework of the combat against human trafficking in general. This is a reflection of the importance that we the States Members of the United Nations attach to eradicating this appalling scourge, which, lest we forget, undermines the rule of law and development, and, above all, is a call on the universal conscience.

I should like to thank the British presidency for the timely choice of returning to this issue, this time placing emphasis on and forced labour, slavery and other similar practices in conflict situations. I thank also Secretary-General António Guterres for his important statement, as well as our briefers today, Mr. Fedotov, Mr. Hyland and Ms. Elman. Their briefings were extremely instructive and illuminating with respect to the gravity and scale of this scourge.

The armed conflicts currently under way throughout the world unfortunately represent an opportunity for traffickers, as the impunity resulting from the breakdown of law and order allows them to operate more easily and on a broader scale. Moreover, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in its 2016 report, clearly highlights the complex links between human trafficking and armed conflict. In addition, migrants are the victims of trafficking and smuggling in conflict zones, specifically because of those very conflicts. During armed conflict, the loss and lack of economic opportunity, discrimination and gender violence are compounded. Family support networks are weakened or destroyed, all of which contributes to exacerbating individual and collective vulnerability to trafficking.

The resurgence of the phenomenon of human trafficking in armed conflict situations is all the more troubling since it leads to the forced marriage and sexual or domestic enslavement of women and girls, and to men and boys being trafficked into forced labour, if not enslaved outright or turned into combatants.

Therefore, it is clear that human trafficking can be described as — to use the term of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children — an “umbrella concept” for practices that are all equally inhuman and barbaric in nature.

While certain forms of trafficking result from exacerbated vulnerability due to conflict, others are the direct result of the actions of armed groups that operate in conflict zones. My delegation would like in particular to reiterate its growing concern at the involvement of non-State and terrorist armed groups in human trafficking in situations of conflict, often with the goal of modifying the composition of a community or persecuting or humiliating a given ethnic or religious group. These practices, which, sadly, we have had difficulty eradicating, are used by extremist groups not only as terrorist tactics but also as a strategy of war, with a view to furthering their goals and ideology, consolidate their power or to increase their sources of financing.

It is therefore crucial that we conduct an intensive and determined struggle against all forms of human trafficking in situations of armed conflict, including against forced labour, slavery and other, similar practices. These practices, in addition to constituting grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and exacerbating instability, contribute to the fuelling of terrorist groups. We therefore cannot but reiterate the overriding need to implement resolution 2195 (2014), on the links between terrorism and transnational organized crime, as well as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

In terms of the struggle under way in my country, allow me to highlight the fact that in addition to having ratified virtually all international and regional instruments relative to human trafficking, Senegal also has adopted legislative and regulatory instruments that address the issues of migration and human trafficking, particularly through a specific law on the trafficking of persons and similar practices and on the protection of victims, which was adopted in 2005 and complements the Senegalese penal code. That law criminalizes the trafficking of persons and similar practices by placing emphasis on the diverse forms of exploitation of vulnerable persons and their transnational organized character.

Furthermore, in order effectively to clamp down on violations in the field of human trafficking and in the trafficking of migrants, chapter 3 of that same law confers to the Senegalese authorities two kinds of competence, one universal, through article 10, and the other based on the passive personality principle, through article 11.

In addition to this legal framework, a set of structures exists for addressing problems linked to human trafficking, including a counselling and guidance centre for children in difficult situations, an inter-sectoral department for combating child labour and a national unit to combat trafficking in persons. The latter has two missions: one to provide early warning, monitoring, information and communication, and a scientific mission, which is to formulate proposals for the modification of legislation on human trafficking and harmonize them.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to stress the need for the international community to focus on prevention, protection, reintegration and accountability in the framework of combating all scourges that threaten humankind, including conflicts and human trafficking in situations of conflict. In this regard, we will have to ensure that we can effectively focus on deterring, detecting and ending human trafficking, in particular as carried out by violent extremist groups, as the Council highlighted in its presidential statement on human trafficking issued on 20 December 2015 (S/PRST/2015/25).

Human trafficking in situations of armed conflict constitutes a threat to stability, the maintenance of peace and reconstruction in affected countries. We are in duty bound to collectively and in a concerted manner put an end to these repugnant practices.