

**Mr. Galbavý (Slovakia):**

I wish to thank the United Kingdom delegation for convening today's open debate on modern slavery, human trafficking and conflict. The problem is global, affecting poor and rich countries alike. Today's debate is also timely as it takes place in conjunction with the ongoing sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Women and girls are the most targeted group in terms of human trafficking and exploitation.

While aligning ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union delivered earlier, I would like to briefly make the following points on the subject in my national capacity.

Human trafficking and modern slavery have become one of the most profitable and fastest growing areas of activities of transnational organized crime, holding millions of people in inhuman conditions, violating their dignity, personal freedom and human rights. Poverty is at the root of the problem, as is lack of awareness of both victims and the general public. Emergencies, such as massive movements of people caused by terrorism, war, poverty and oppression, create an enabling environment where vulnerable groups of people become easy targets and victims.

Human trafficking takes many different forms and targets men, women, girls and boys alike. As has been mentioned, according to the International Labour Organization, there are 21 million people around the world trapped in some form of modern slavery, including trafficking, debt bondage and child labour. New forms and ways of this criminal activity frequently emerge.

We need a mix of strong policies at the national level and concerted action at the international level. States must not only criminalize slavery and punish perpetrators but also must make every effort to prevent it and offer protection and remedy to victims. We must also do more to address root causes of radicalism, violent extremism and international terrorism.

Slovakia is committed to doing its share in the fight against modern slavery. We have ratified all major international treaties and implemented the relevant European Union legislation. We have strengthened our criminal code and our code of criminal procedure, in order, in particular, to increase protection of child victims. We have established an institute for national anti-trafficking coordination at the State Secretary level of the Ministry of the Interior and adopted the National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for the years 2015-2018, with the aim of effectively combating human trafficking through coordinated activities of all entities involved at the national level.

In conclusion, once again, allow me to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting. My delegation will continue to engage in a constructive manner in our collective efforts to effectively mitigate the scourge of modern-day slavery.