

I wish to begin my statement by warmly thanking the following for their presence participation in today's debate: Secretary-General Ban-Ki-moon; Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Ms. Zainab Hava Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Ms. Ameena Saeed Hasan; and Ms. Nadia Murad Basee Taha.

This meeting is particularly important for Spain not only because of the topic's relevance but also because it is the last debate that my country shall convene as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. Moreover, human trafficking is a clear affront to human dignity and also represents a threat to international peace and security in conflict and terrorism-related situations. It is a reincarnation of slavery in the midst of the twenty-first century. Leaders from throughout the world and representatives of civil society have underscored the moral imperative of combating human trafficking and all modern forms of slavery. The victims, the majority of whom are women and children, require — as was stated here — an urgent response, in particular by the Security Council.

My delegation proposes a paradigm shift recognizing that national judicial systems can break down in conflict situations. Under those circumstances, action by the Security Council becomes necessary. It is on that basis that we proposed resolution 2331 (2016), the first resolution in the history of the Security Council on this tragic phenomenon.

With this open debate, we are beginning to engage in what will be a deep reflection upon what contributions the Council can make to condemn human trafficking in areas of conflicts and the situations of exploitation to which that trafficking leads. We also propose exploring means of strengthening the normative framework in the area of sanctions, financial flows, victim protection and assistance and developing a more effective strategy in the fight against human trafficking in areas of conflict. The response of the United Nations to the scourge of human trafficking continues to be fragmented. Eradicating this scourge requires more than just the efforts of a single region, country, or department or agency of the United Nations. It requires efforts from all parties concerned, including the Council.

Unfortunately, the connection between conflict and human trafficking is not a new one. The novel element is the use of human trafficking as a tactic in terrorism in the economy of war by groups like Da'esh, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. We have just heard the shocking account of a brave survivor, Ms. Nadia Murad Basee Taha, who is now a strong defender of the rights of the Yazidi people in Iraq and the winner of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. We have also heard from someone who risked her life to rescue many of those victims, Ms. Ameena Saeed Hasan. Both of them, along with Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hava Bangura, have explained how Da'esh is openly promoting the trafficking and

enslavement of women and children, thereby defying the most elemental norms of international law.

However, trafficking in situations of conflict is not limited to the context of terrorism. The conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Libya and the Sahel — just to mention a few — are leading to the mass displacement of particularly vulnerable groups. That renders them even more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking networks. Like many other countries, at the end of 2015, Spain adopted a new comprehensive plan to fight human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Also in 2015, my Government strengthened coordination between civil society organizations and our State security agencies. We have worked to develop a counternarrative to extremism as part of our national strategy to fight violent extremism. My country has put in place a communication strategy on cyberspace that includes a counternarrative to radicalization. In that regard, it is essential to monitor social networks in order to prevent extremism and gain knowledge of any radical content that could lead to trafficking.

The next five years afford us a historic opportunity for us to place the fight against the worst forms of exploitation at the top of the list of United Nations priorities. While important progress has been made in certain areas, much remains to be done. In that regard, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts in combating sexual exploitation and abuse and his zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual violence, which in some cases is perpetrated by Blue Helmets. I would like to conclude by stating that my country will resolutely support all efforts to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice and that they serve their sentences. Let us strengthen our efforts to achieve that goal. That is what I ask of everyone today.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the other members of the Council.