

Ms. Mendelson (United States of America):

I would like to begin by expressing our condolences to the friends, family and colleagues of Andrey Karlov and all those affected by yesterday's attacks.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General, the President of the Government of Spain, Mr. Rajoy Brey, Executive Director Fedotov, Special Representative Bangura and, of course, Ms. Aameena Saeed Hasan and Ms. Nadia Murad Basee Taha for their dedication to combating trafficking in persons in all its forms. We particularly appreciate Spain's leadership on the issue and its initiative in introducing today's historic resolution 2331 (2016).

A year ago, as many today have noted, the Council met for the first time in its 70-year history to discuss the issue of human trafficking in conflict (see S/PV.7585). Before that meeting, and again today, some argued that the subject did not belong in the Security Council and was not really a security issue. Yet those of us who were in the Chamber a year ago, and again today, will never forget Nadia Murad's testimony about Da'esh's institutionalization of slavery and sexual violence, and the nihilistic use of Yazidi women as "trafficked flesh" to recruit male fighters. It is an honour to know Nadia. Her testimony bears witness in a way that not only moves the human spirit but provides the sort of gripping, empirical account of how Da'esh functions that was heard at the Nuremberg trials. Her very being is a reminder of the resilience, bravery and strength that some, including her, are capable of.

Thanks to the tenacious efforts of civil society — non-governmental organizations, journalists, religious leaders and survivors — we have seen progress. Governments, the United Nations and other organizations have elevated attention both in the public consciousness and political discourse to the horrors of modern slavery and the duty we have to respond. A year on, I wish we could say that, thanks to advocacy and collective action, the exploitation of human beings in times of conflict has abated.

Unfortunately, that is not the case. In 2016, children were still lured by human traffickers from refugee camps, and young boys were forced to pick up guns and become soldiers. In Da'esh-held territory, the depravity of sexual slavery has continued to shock. Thanks to the courageous work of Special Representative Bangura and her staff, the United Nations has incontrovertible proof that young women are bought, sold and horrifically abused on a daily basis. The United States appreciates the initiative of the United Kingdom in the pursuit of justice for Da'esh's victims, and is working with it and Iraq to explore the best ways to hold Da'esh accountable, including gathering and preserving evidence of its crimes.

Although much recent attention has focused on human trafficking in situations of conflict

in the Middle East we know that trafficking in conflict zones is not a new phenomenon and that researchers and activists, myself included, have documented it in many conflict and post-conflict situations, from Bosnia and Kosovo to Nigeria and Afghanistan. Yet despite increased attention and outrage, we still face critical gaps in our understanding of human trafficking in the context of conflict and post-conflict situations. Where we know that trafficking is taking place, our ability to stop the abuse, hold traffickers to account and deliver assistance to the victims is often non-existent or woefully inadequate.

That is why the resolution that the Council adopted today is so important. By articulating the nexus between conflict, sexual violence and trafficking in persons, we can take practical action. Together, we can get Governments, civil society and the United Nations system to begin to systematically monitor for signs of trafficking in conflict, to train relevant humanitarian personnel and all peacekeeping personnel in how to recognize and respond to victims, to analyse financial flows — follow the money — in order to identify where terrorist and armed groups are profiting from the proceeds of human trafficking, and to share information on and to seek justice for those crimes.

While it is critical to close the information gap — let me note that too few people know and understand this issue, including too few inside ministries of defence — knowledge is but one critical aspect. The resolution also calls on all members to criminalize and vigorously prosecute the individuals and groups that facilitate and profit from human trafficking. It encourages the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, to brief sanctions committees on identified trafficking patterns and perpetrators. It provides arms committees with a mandate to sanction perpetrators, as part of established sanctions regimes.

Within the context of emergency humanitarian operations, resolution 2331 (2016) underscores the importance of humanitarian actors identifying and providing services to trafficking victims during and after humanitarian crises. Those services must be resourced by Member States and, again, the humanitarians must be trained to identify possible victims.

Finally, the resolution recognizes that individuals who are subjected to sexual violence and human trafficking at the hands of terrorist groups are also victims of terrorism and should be provided with the same restorative services and support available to other such victims. Since 2000 and the adoption of its Trafficking Victims Protection Act, the United States has been a leader on this issue. The United States is proud to support resolution 2331 (2016). Consistent with our dedication to ending trafficking in persons in all its forms, we look forward to strengthening international cooperation in combating trafficking.

