

Mr. Winid (Poland):

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on the important topic of trafficking in persons in conflict situations, forced labour and slavery. We listened carefully to the briefers' compelling presentations, which were a reminder of the work we have ahead of us.

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union (EU), but I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

According to International Labour Organization (ILO) data, today almost 21 million people are victims of forced labour. Of those exploited by individuals or enterprises, 4.5 million are victims of forced sexual exploitation. And the most horrifying number is the approximately 5.5 million children around the world whose lives are damaged by trafficking and forced labour under the threat of violence. This deplorable and dangerous phenomenon, which exists on every continent, is increasing in scale, and it calls for global attention and action on the part of the international community.

Contemporary forms of slavery are linked to discrimination, social exclusion, gender inequality and poverty. Their implications for peace and security are especially visible in countries affected by conflict, and they can also undermine peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict situations.

Poland remains determined to fight human trafficking and forced labour and is involved in combating the problem at national, regional and international levels. The Polish criminal code defines and criminalizes slavery and human trafficking. At the regional level, Poland implements anti-trafficking policies, a subject that I believe was largely covered in the EU statement. In the framework of the United Nations, Poland was one of the initiators of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We have also ratified all the major ILO conventions related to forced labour, including the Forced Labour Convention of 1930. In December 2016 we contributed to the Security Council's open debate on trafficking in persons (see S/PV.7848), held under the Spanish presidency, and we co-sponsored resolution 2331 (2016), on the topic.

In Geneva last year, Poland supported the renewal by the Human Rights Council of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery. We also support the work of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. In that regard, we urge the international community to strengthen activities aimed at protecting children in conflict, and we highlight the role that national ombudspersons for children can play in that area.

Last but not least, we fully support target 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to ensure that immediate and effective measures are taken to eradicate forced labour and end modern slavery and human trafficking, including by ending child labour in all its forms by 2025.

In our view, when addressing modern forms of slavery, three issues are of the utmost importance: first, rising awareness and enhancing prevention; secondly, proper identification, investigation and prosecution of those crimes; and thirdly, protection and support for the victims. Those goals all require the enhanced attention and common efforts of the Government, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, survivors, community and religious leaders. With better tailored strategies we will be able to reach at-risk populations, weaken international criminal networks and, ultimately, strengthen the rule of law and peace and security.

In closing, I wish to underline that it is our common responsibility to counter the dehumanizing effects of modern slavery and to ensure that the voices of the victims are heard. That is why I wish to once again thank the United Kingdom for the opportunity to speak on this particular and very important topic.

