

**Statement by H. E. Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the UN
Open debate of the Security Council on Trafficking in persons in conflict situations**

Mr. President,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the distinguished representative of the European Union.

At the outset I would like to thank the Secretary-General António Guterres, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Yuri Fedotov and Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children Maria Grazia Giammarinaro for their briefings. I would also like to thank the Italian presidency for convening this open debate. And last but not least, I would like to thank all the council members for adopting the resolution that helps to keep the momentum and attention on this important agenda.

Trafficking in persons is one of the worst crimes constituting violations of human rights. It violates one's dignity and undermines the basics of humanity. This heinous phenomenon has spread worldwide and is present in some form in almost every country in the world. Human trafficking counts millions of victims and provides enormous profits. Its victims would make a TOP35 country in the world, with population more than 40 million people. Its revenues are comparable to the ones of the TOP20 company in the world - 150 billions of US Dollars annually. Research estimate that we would need to spend only 15% of modern slavery profit to completely eradicate this malpractice, and it would take us two decades. But what we need the most are political will and determination translated into concrete actions on the ground.

Slovakia remains deeply committed to combat human trafficking. After ratifying all major international treaties and having implemented respective EU legislation, we also strengthened our national laws in order to increase protection of victims. Our State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic is the national anti-trafficking coordinator who covers the national referral mechanism in Slovakia and chairs the Expert Group for the field of combating trafficking in human beings. We pursue objectives and steps proposed by the National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking for the Years 2015 - 2018.

Mr. President,

Less than two months ago, we agreed on Political Declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We stressed out the need to address the factors increasing the vulnerability to trafficking - poverty, unemployment, inequality and conflicts. We must focus on prevention rather than on response. If needed, protection of victims and prosecution of perpetrators must be timely, accurate and comprehensive.

Raising awareness about the existence of human trafficking may reduce the risk of becoming a victim of it. Education, advertising campaigns, events focusing on human trafficking and informing specific groups are few means of prevention. We have to improve the protection of victims by providing them with special assistance and professional approach, but we have to work also on their ability to self-identify as victims. Our action against perpetrators must be resolute, coordinated and effective. We have to improve knowledge of procedures, methods and forms of detection and prosecution on national levels and enhance international cooperation and mutual investigation of transnational organised criminal networks and illicit financial flows.

Mr. President,

As I stated earlier, human trafficking is present in almost every country in the world, and so every country in the world must do its part to tackle it. Individually, but at the same time jointly, only that way we will be able to speak about human trafficking in the past tense.

I thank you Mr. President.