

Statement by H.E. František Ružička, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations in the UNSC Ministerial Open Debate “Trafficking in Persons in Conflict Situations” (20.12.2016)

Mr. President/Mr. Prime Minister,

In a few days millions of people will celebrate Holiday season. With families, friends. Joy from giving and sharing. Just yesterday this chamber was able **to adopt unanimously Resolution 2328 to deploy observers to Aleppo. *One of many steps*** to be taken to give millions of refugees and people in need the best gift – ***decent life in peace.***

Only few hours later we heard about **terrible attacks in Berlin, Istanbul and Zurich.** Our feelings and thoughts are with the families and friends of those who perished in this horrible attacks. Our sympathy goes to our colleagues from Russia, Germany, and Switzerland. But, honestly, ***four minutes of time allocated for my intervention will not be enough to name all countries that had to encounter terrorist attacks only in this year...***

Yet today we discuss another phenomena that takes or affects millions of lives. Mostly young ones. **Modern slavery.** Happens all around us – in different forms, in developed and developing countries. Affecting rich and poor societies – though both in different ways.

Human trafficking is the ***third largest international crime industry*** (behind illegal drugs and arms trafficking). It reportedly generates a profit of \$32 billion every year. **In next four minutes = it is almost 250 000 USD.**

Of that number, ***\$15.5 billion is made in industrialized countries.***

Forced labor in the private economy according to ILO (2012) ***generates an estimated \$150 billion in illegal profits per year.***

Almost twice of GDP in Slovakia in 2015.

Every minute we speak at least one person is trafficked across international borders. 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked every year. 80% are female and half are children.

Trafficking for forced labour, sexual exploitation, for the harvesting of tissue, cells and organs represent the cruelest types of international organized crime. Very well **fueled by poverty or conflicts**.

We must ***do more than express our strong condemnation*** of trafficking in persons. Modern slavery ***undermines human dignity, human rights and effects human development***.

Allow me, Mr. President, to make few points, **seven**, to be exact, Slovakia considers important in effective handling of this crime:

First: we need to make ***better use of the existing global convention*** and its protocols. **The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime**, and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children provide the solid framework.

The need to promote the universal ratification of the convention and to adopt ***effective national plans and strategies*** for its implementation is a must.

Second: Sustainable Development Goals specifically address human trafficking in the targets and ***goals No. 5, 8, and 16***. This gives a hope that confronting grave human rights violations we address today will ***become a priority for all countries in the world***.

Third: the **nexus between trafficking and conflict related sexual violence** is evident. Armed conflict situations lead to increased trafficking in women and sexual assault of women and girls. It is crucial that all countries fulfil their relevant international ***obligations concerning women and armed conflict***, such as commitments of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform* and the milestone *UNSC resolution 1325*.

Fourth: protecting trafficking victims and saving lives should be utmost priority for the entire international community. As stated in **UNSC PRST** from last December: *"The UN agencies operating in armed conflict and post-conflict situations should strengthen their (technical) capacity to assess conflict situations for instances of trafficking in persons"*.

In post-conflict context we should be able to ***better protect, assist and support victims.*** In a post-conflict dysfunctional law enforcement and justice environment the UN should take effective measures, while respecting national ownership and specificities of country, to offer technical and planning expertise in **reforming the security and justice institutions.**

Fifth: **close cooperation between the UN and subregional, regional and cross-regional bodies and initiatives** should aim at the establishment of a global and efficient cooperation framework.

Sixth: as has been highlighted by the **Secretary-General:** *“escaping from a conflict zone or arrival at a sought-after destination does not always shield those fleeing conflict from becoming victims of trafficking.”*

Enhanced attention should therefore be paid to the international **protection of refugees** and to addressing the **special needs of migrants** in vulnerable situations. At the same time, we need to step up international efforts in tackling the **multi-dimensional root causes of the current refugee and irregular migration** crisis and broader forced displacement.

Seventh: UN must seize every opportunity to contribute to conflict resolution. To tackle the spread and intensity of conflict, renewed commitment to **prevention and mediation** is needed. **Preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts** must be stepped up across the whole UN system.

Mr. President,

In the past, human trafficking was associated mainly with smaller or larger crime groups. Today trafficking in persons plays a growing role in the operation of terrorist organizations.

The **resolution adopted today**, which my country co-sponsored, together with the adoption on 12 December 2016 of **resolution 2322**, aimed at enhancing and fortifying judicial cooperation worldwide, are in our view needful steps in confronting the interrelated global challenges of terrorism and trafficking in persons in conflict situations.

Thank you for your attention.