

**Trafficking in persons in conflict situations: forced labour, slavery and
other similar practices**

15 March 2017

UN Security Council Chamber, New York

Statement by Ireland

Minister for International Development Joe McHugh, TD

[Check against delivery]

Mr. President,

Thank you for convening today's important debate. Ireland was proud to co-sponsor Resolution 2331 on Trafficking in Persons in Conflict, adopted last December. We see today's debate as a crucial opportunity to continue this momentum. This is an issue that affects an estimated 21 million people worldwide, of whom over 5 million are children. It is therefore incumbent on us to do everything possible to address it.

I align myself fully with the statement delivered by the European Union. The EU has also taken a leading role in various policy and programme initiatives to prevent and combat human trafficking, and Ireland will continue its support to these endeavours.

Mr. President, I will make three main points in my national capacity.

One, human trafficking is a current reality and we need to respond.

Sensitisation training and capacity building will lie at the core of our response to cases of human trafficking, forced labour and modern slavery.

- Security officials must know the signs to look for and the support to request.
- First responders must be sensitised to ensure victims – especially women and girls – receive the medical and psycho-social care they urgently need.

- Law enforcement and legal officials must be aware of the rights and responsibilities involved in such cases.
- Civil society organisations must be empowered to act as watchdogs throughout.

An effective response to human trafficking also requires partnerships to be formed both within, and across, international and regional bodies. We are pleased to see increasing partnership between INTERPOL and the UN as one example of progress in this area. The work of UN regional offices in building partnerships with sub-regional organisations will also play a key role going forward.

Two, human trafficking will continue unless we prioritise prevention.

Ireland believes impunity acts as a driver of human trafficking. We need to tackle this head-on and see accountability as key to prevention. National systems must be equipped to uphold international and customary standards of justice in cases related to human trafficking and modern slavery.

Moreover, we strongly believe that more focus is needed on the conditions that make people vulnerable to human traffickers, leading to them becoming trapped in cycles of forced labour or modern slavery. Poverty and economic hardship are major factors in this respect. It is for this reason that implementation of the 2030 Agenda is crucial. Human trafficking is explicitly addressed in four different SDGs, though implementation of all 17 goals is necessary to tackle the root causes of this phenomenon.

A stronger focus on Sustaining Peace, particularly in the context of support to conflict prevention initiatives at the national, regional and international level, will also directly contribute to stemming the tide of human trafficking.

Three, we must take a gendered response to human trafficking.

Human trafficking, forced labour and modern slavery force people into circumstances no human being should have to endure. The effects on women and girls can be particularly harrowing.

The New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants commits all States to ensuring that our responses to large movements of refugees and migrants mainstream a gender perspective. This doesn't just entail extra security and response measures; it also means women's *participation* in policies and programmes to combat and prevent human trafficking.

Mr. President,

This issue is a priority for Ireland.

Ireland's commitments are set out in our National Action Plan to prevent and combat human trafficking, now in its second phase. It was developed in consultation with national and international partners, including civil society, and sets out a clear collaborative programme to advance the fight against trafficking and enhance the protection of victims.

Raising public awareness is key to preventing and combating human trafficking. Ireland also provides funding to various international and multilateral funds involved in combating human trafficking.

Preventing human trafficking is an enormous challenge, which requires the concerted efforts of all involved, and only through collaboration at international, regional, bilateral, and national levels will combatting human trafficking be advanced.

[end]