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Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu),
Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 107 (continued)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

The Acting President: Before we proceed, I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to three minutes when speaking in their national capacity, as stipulated in resolution 71/287. As members will recall, in its resolution 71/323, of 8 September 2017, the General Assembly called for strict adherence by each speaker to the time limits in the Assembly, particularly during high-level meetings. This will enable maximum participation within the limited time available for the meeting. Participants with longer statements are encouraged to read a shorter version of their text and to submit their full statements to the Secretariat for posting on the PaperSmart portal.

Also in accordance with resolution 71/323, the “all protocol observed” principle, whereby participants are encouraged, in the interest of saving time, to refrain from the listing of standard protocol expressions during their statements, is recommended. In the light of the given time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly. To assist

speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speaker’s rostrum. May I appeal to all speakers for their cooperation in observing the time limit of their statements, so that all those inscribed can be heard in a timely manner.

I now give the floor to the deputy Chair of the delegation of Ethiopia.

Ms. Hailu (Ethiopia): I would like to start by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting on an important issue. Ethiopia welcomes the Assembly’s unanimous adoption of the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1).

Poverty, climate change, the level of development among States and societies, different standards of living, the income inequality that prevails in many countries, as well as conflict, are all factors that increase the vulnerability of people to human trafficking. For instance, migrants who cross international borders in search of a better life may become victims of human-trafficking and smuggling networks. Similarly, refugees who already find themselves in a vulnerable situation due to a lack of durable solutions, including those who engage in secondary movements, become prey to traffickers and smugglers.

Victims of trafficking continue to face unimaginable and often fatal dangers along their journeys, owing to the limited opportunities for legal migration and durable solutions. They continue to face various human rights violations, including violations of their labour rights

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and multiple forms of discrimination in transit and destination countries. All of these challenges require a comprehensive and holistic response that could be based on the three following pillars.

The first would address the root causes of trafficking in persons, such as poverty, unemployment and conflict. This approach requires States to take concrete steps to design and implement projects tailored to specific communities affected by trafficking in persons, contributing to their economic and social development and involving relevant development actors. As refugees are the group most vulnerable to trafficking in persons, this approach also requires us to find durable solutions to their particular situations. That could be achieved by enhancing support to countries hosting large numbers of refugees, based on the principles of international cooperation and responsibility sharing, and by strengthening the capacity of refugee camps to offer skills training and income-generating activities.

The second pillar would create interim frameworks for international protection, humanitarian assistance and efforts to address the needs of victims of trafficking. As such, the provision of lifesaving humanitarian assistance and basic necessities to victims of trafficking in countries of transit and destination is critical. In this context, maintaining the capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies and strengthening international assistance to victims of trafficking remains central.

The third pillar would create safe, orderly and legal pathways by adopting a rights-based approach that ensures the protection of victims of trafficking in persons in transit and destination countries. This approach would require stronger cooperation among Member States, as underscored by the Secretary-General in his opening statement on Wednesday (see A/72/PV.24).

We can build on existing multilateral and bilateral frameworks, including within the context of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and on resolution 72/1, in order to foster enhanced cooperation in preventing and suppressing trafficking in persons, bring perpetrators to justice and provide support to victims. Building on existing frameworks to address trafficking in persons, including through the political declaration adopted on Wednesday, will also

be necessary if we are to fill gaps in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration expected to be adopted next year.

In our view, these three pillars will enable the international community to respond to trafficking in persons in a comprehensive and holistic manner. I would therefore like to conclude by reaffirming our commitment to redoubling our efforts aimed at combating trafficking in persons based on these three pillars and within the context of resolution 72/1 and our obligations under various multilateral and bilateral frameworks.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan): I would first like to commend the President of the General Assembly for convening this important and timely high-level meeting.

In today's world, human trafficking is one of the most dangerous types of transnational organized crime. It continues to remain a serious challenge for the entire international community. In Uzbekistan, we are addressing this phenomenon at the State level. For example, in 2008, in order to take effective measures to prevent and combat human trafficking, we adopted a national law on countering human trafficking. Pursuant to this legislation, our President signed a decree on measures to improve the effectiveness of our efforts to combat human trafficking.

To assist in coordinating the activities of the departments involved in the fight against human trafficking, we created a national inter-agency commission on combating human trafficking, consisting of our Heads of State and Government, agencies and public organizations, ministries and departments, a women's committee, our national centre for human rights, a parliamentary commissioner for human rights or ombudsman, representatives of our youth union and a number of other non-governmental organizations. Our Prosecutor-General chairs the commission, since the Office of the Prosecutor-General has been assigned the task of coordinating the activities of relevant agencies in the fight against human trafficking.

In the framework of implementing Uzbekistan's law on countering human trafficking, the Cabinet adopted a decree in 2008 forming a national rehabilitation centre for assisting and protecting victims of human trafficking, which now plays an important role in

assisting victims of human trafficking in their return to normal life.

Illegal migration has recently become another acute global problem associated with human trafficking. From Uzbekistan's perspective, an effective way to prevent illegal migration for overseas employment is to increase citizens' awareness of potential difficulties in migration by explaining accountability for violations of the labour, tax, customs, passport and visa regulations of the countries where potential victims plan to reside. We have also launched a wide-ranging media campaign to increase public awareness not only of the dangers of human trafficking but also of the specific effects of crimes related to human trafficking and their negative consequences. In cases of the illegal exploitation of persons for labour purposes, for example, criminal proceedings are instituted against the individuals directly involved in this form of human trafficking. In addition, Uzbekistan is a signatory to major international conventions on combating illegal human trafficking, protecting its victims and punishing those who are involved in this criminal activity.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the Government of Uzbekistan has been consistent in its approach to combating human trafficking. We therefore remain committed to cooperating with the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Labour Organization and other international structures and parties through active participation in joint projects aimed at preventing human trafficking and protecting its victims.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Belize.

Ms. Young (Belize): I would like to begin by expressing my delegation's deep appreciation to Ms. Grizelda Grootboom, whose strength and courage in standing before the world and sharing a story that she would no doubt rather banish from than burnish in her memory is unfathomable (see A/72/PV.24). But her story must be told, lest we forget that human beings no different from any of us in this Hall and no different from our own children are today being made to suffer the most intolerable indignity and inhumanity, something that should have been consigned to history when slavery was abolished more than a century and a half ago. Grizelda's story tells us of a human being's inherent vulnerability and society's blind eye. It tells

us of how our failure to act all but perpetuates the impunity of traffickers and exploiters.

In Belize, we have a low incidence of cases of human trafficking but high incidences of human smuggling and commercial sex work, both of which promote vulnerability. For this reason, we have adopted legislation and a national plan of action to combat trafficking. Our national approach is multi-pronged and victim-centric, focusing first on prevention and capacity-building, on understanding the context in which trafficking occurs or might occur, and on how to prevent it through education and public awareness. Secondly, it focuses on how to protect victims and ensure their safety, and thirdly, on prosecution and how to ensure that justice is served. Fourthly, it focuses on partnerships and how to optimize our efforts through local, regional and international partnerships. Through increased cooperation, Belize hopes to complement these efforts with long-term assistance for victims, advanced training for investigators, the establishment of specialized investigative units and dedicated prosecutors and judges, and the implementation of a fast-track system for human-trafficking cases.

All of us here today are committed to combating trafficking, but we have not done enough. There are tens of millions of victims whose stories have yet to be told, which is a blight on humankind and an indictment of us all. I stand here to add my country's voice to those of all victims and survivors. Belize reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We fully support the adoption of the political declaration (resolution 72/1), which strengthens our resolve to vanquish this form of modern-day slavery once and for all.

To echo Grizelda's words, we cannot act on paper alone; human trafficking must be a real priority. We must match our resolve by delivering equally on the necessary resources and the widest cooperation at the national, regional and international levels. For Belize, combating trafficking is an absolute moral necessity, and we will make every effort to triumph over this heinous crime.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): My delegation commends and appreciates the initiative of the President of the

General Assembly in convening this high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We believe that the political declaration that we adopted late last week (resolution 72/1) should provide renewed momentum for translating the Global Plan of Action into reality without delay.

The heinous crime of human trafficking continues to taint our civilizations. No country — large or small, rich or poor, whether of origin, transit or destination — is immune to what has now grown to be a global menace. Poverty, discrimination, disasters, false dreams of success, empty promises made by unscrupulous operators, and forced migratory movements, among other things, are increasingly making it worse. Thousands of young boys and girls in our country, especially those from rural Nepal, seeking jobs in cities and foreign countries, are prone to trafficking. Heart-wrenching stories of young women and girls being trafficked abound, owing mainly to poverty, ignorance and temptation on their part, as well as inhuman greed on the part of traffickers.

Nepal has put in place strong legal and institutional measures at the national level to curb such crimes. Our efforts to address the root causes of human trafficking are focused on the principles of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, with due attention being paid to both the push and pull factors of human trafficking. The Constitution of Nepal of 2015 guarantees the right to be free from exploitation and bars human trafficking, forced and bonded labour. These serious crimes are punishable under the laws of Nepal. The Constitution also ensures legal remedies and compensation for the victims of slavery, bonded labour, trafficking and child labour.

Back in 2000, Nepal was the first country in South Asia to launch a national plan of action against trafficking in women and children. At the regional level, Nepal is a party to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children. At the global level, Nepal is a State party to 24 international human rights conventions, including seven of eight fundamental International Labour Organization conventions, most importantly those relating to protection of the victims of slavery and human trafficking.

I want to conclude by underscoring three specific points as part of our way forward in implementing the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

First, all Governments, international organizations, businesses and academic and philanthropic organizations should join hands to fight this multidimensional crime, focusing on its root causes. Nepal has a number of dedicated and credible institutions that can do much more if their capacity is strengthened further. The fact is that capacity-building at the local and national level is urgent and critical.

Secondly, the growing use of social media to tempt unsuspecting men, women and children into being trafficked should be dealt with head on. To do this and to curb tech-savvy traffickers, we should put in place additional security measures, including capacity-building and real-time information-sharing. Partnership that helps to build capacity is a must in that regard.

Thirdly, as was underlined by Nepal at the recent high-level meetings, the importance of investing in education and raising people's awareness should come into sharp focus through our concerted efforts in partnership with United Nations agencies and civil-society organizations. Increased engagement on the part of communities, local health workers, teachers and mothers' groups, among others, is an absolute necessity if we are to prevent these crimes, bring perpetrators to justice and ensure that the victims are compensated and reintegrated with dignity so that they can become fully productive members of society. All of these efforts will directly contribute to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals within the stipulated time frame.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I call on the observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Mr. De Rojas (Sovereign Order of Malta): I am delivering this statement on behalf of our Ambassador-at-Large for Monitoring and Combating Trafficking in Persons, Ambassador Michel Veuthey, who was here all of last week. He was supposed to speak on Thursday, but unfortunately had to return to our headquarters.

(spoke in French)

The Sovereign Order of Malta would like to thank the President for giving us the opportunity to speak at this high-level meeting on such a major issue. Since its founding 900 years ago, the mission of the Order of Malta, a sovereign entity in public international

law, has been to help vulnerable people. The Order of Malta now supports more than 2,000 medical, social and humanitarian projects in more than 120 countries, regardless of religion, ethnicity or nationality. We reaffirm the commitment of the Order of Malta to helping reduce the vulnerability of migrants and refugees and to protecting them, particularly victims of human trafficking.

The Order of Malta will strengthen its efforts by using its diplomatic network, both multilaterally and bilaterally, through its Ambassadors in 106 countries. In addition, we will increase the social services and humanitarian actions of our national associations and our global humanitarian organization, Malteser International.

The Order of Malta will continue to listen to other actors and learn from their best practices. We are open to cooperating with Governments and civil society to help better protect and rehabilitate the victims of contemporary slavery.

The President took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to ask the following three questions. First, how can we better use the values of solidarity and respect for human life to strengthen the legal instruments of national and international law — human rights, labour law, refugee law and the international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts, in order to end human trafficking? Secondly, how can we better highlight and share the contribution of faith-based organizations that protect and assist victims of trafficking in human beings nationally and internationally? Thirdly, how are we going to use next year's seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to highlight the plight of victims of human trafficking and the urgent need for States and civil society to assist and protect them, in accordance with the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons?

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/90 of 12 December 2001, I call on the observer of the International Development Law Organization.

Ms. Arenas Licea (International Development Law Organization): The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) welcomes this high-level meeting and the adoption of the political declaration (resolution 72/1).

As the only intergovernmental organization with an exclusive mandate to advance the rule of law and access to justice globally in the pursuit of sustainable development, our work is firmly focused on combating the underlying factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking, such as inequality, gender discrimination, social exclusion and marginalization.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in Goal 16, provides us with a road map for building a world in which the conditions that often breed trafficking may be eradicated. Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime and antithetical to the rule of law. It is also a criminal act. Although trafficking is outlawed by several international treaties and conventions and despite the fact that Governments have made progress in passing relevant national legislation, much remains to be done to strengthen existing legal frameworks so as to ensure that the tools exist to pursue criminal charges. As part of our contribution towards preventing trafficking, the IDLO has provided technical assistance in the review and improvement of national legislation in line with international standards, created national anti-trafficking strategies and supported their implementation.

A strong, independent judiciary, together with properly trained police, prosecutors and border officials, backed by laws and regulations in line with international obligations, means that well-established institutions will be able to bring those guilty of trafficking to justice. Developing the capacity of legal and justice systems is critical for us to be able to effectively tackle trafficking in persons. However, institutions are not enough. People must be made aware of their rights in order to be able to claim them. That is why, alongside its capacity-development programmes, the IDLO also promotes legal-empowerment strategies and seeks to ensure that women, poor people, migrants and other marginalized groups can gain access to legal services, including legal aid. These are key ingredients for both prevention and protection.

Human trafficking continues to exploit millions of victims, the majority of whom are women and girls. We need to take a gender-centred approach when making interventions to tackle trafficking. Any discussion on women and girl survivors of trafficking must take into account the inequality and vulnerability that are often at the root of the problem. We cannot effectively protect women and girls from trafficking if we are not ready to combat gender discrimination globally and if we are

not willing to work to shatter the power structures that perpetuate this global challenge. Ultimately, trafficking is a business that deals in human suffering.

Trafficking is a cross-border, global problem that requires global action. Let us all unite to work together to end it.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/1 of 15 October 1996, I call on the observer of the International Criminal Police Organization.

Ms. Neugebauer (International Criminal Police Organization): I am happy to represent the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) at today's high-level meeting on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. INTERPOL is pleased to have been acknowledged in the political declaration (resolution 72/1) as an important contributor to combating this global phenomenon.

As the Assembly is aware, trafficking in persons is a crime that affects all regions and all countries in the world. It has many different faces. Member States can be affected as countries of origin, transit or destination. Although trafficking in persons takes such varied forms, international law-enforcement cooperation remains key to tackling any and all of them.

As the only global police organization, INTERPOL, with its 192 member States, is ideally situated to help its members disrupt cross-border criminal networks. INTERPOL has three major programme strategies: counter-terrorism, fighting cybercrime and combating organized and emerging crime. Our strategy against organized and emerging crime clearly establishes fighting human trafficking as one of INTERPOL's greatest commitments and aims to support member States in combating this constantly evolving phenomenon. INTERPOL has a special unit on human trafficking and child exploitation that provides training and operational support to law-enforcement officers with a view to effectively tackling such phenomena.

Border protection is also key to effectively combating human trafficking. Through INTERPOL's secure communication network, I-24/7, which facilitates communication between law-enforcement authorities around the globe in real time, all of our tools and databases can be accessed by them. The stolen and lost travel document database is particularly effective when it comes to countering trafficking in persons. It

currently lists more than 70 million travel documents that have been reported by 175 countries. That data is readily available, but even the most comprehensive database is only truly effective if it is systematically used by front-line officers. We therefore encourage our member States to extend access to relevant databases to border-control officers who need the relevant information in order to make the right decision at the right moment. Let me demonstrate the effectiveness of our databases through an example: in the past two weeks alone, 185 child sex-abuse victims have been identified following checks against INTERPOL databases.

INTERPOL Notices — international requests for cooperation — are another effective tool in combating trafficking in persons. Everyone is familiar with Red Notices, which seek the location or arrest of wanted criminals — in this case, traffickers in persons. But there are other notices that are also highly effective, including the Green Notice, which is used to send warnings about crimes that might extend to other countries and is therefore particularly useful in the fight against trafficking in persons. Green Notices can warn neighbouring States that a known child-sex offender, suspected trafficker or trafficking victim is travelling to their region.

In conclusion, trafficking in persons is modern-day slavery. While it is clear that there are many forms of trafficking, they all have one thing in common: the abuse of vulnerable victims. INTERPOL takes a victim-centric approach focused on identifying and protecting victims. Within its mandate, INTERPOL will continue to do everything in its power to assist member States in identifying and disrupting the operative criminal networks that are behind human trafficking activities.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4 of 16 October 1992, I call on the observer of the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Gorman-Best (International Organization for Migration): The International Organization for Migration (IOM) welcomes the progress made in and the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and supports its way forward. Over the past three decades, the IOM has been playing an active role in combating trafficking in persons. We fully support the Global Plan of Action and commend States Members of the United Nations for adopting the political declaration (resolution 72/1).

The Global Plan of Action is being reviewed at a time of unprecedented global mobility, with 244 million international migrants globally. At the same time, the world is facing multiple complex and protracted crises. There are more than 65 million forcibly displaced persons on the planet today, of whom 40 million have been uprooted within their own countries. We know that the rights of too many migrants continue to be violated during their journeys and have learned from first-hand experience that large-scale displacement caused by humanitarian crises, such as armed conflicts, natural disasters and protracted unrest, can create situations in which people become vulnerable to human trafficking. With this in mind, I would like to highlight three areas in which, from the perspective of the IOM, a more concerted effort is required.

First, while protection frameworks for victims of trafficking have been strengthened in recent years, less progress has been made in preventing human trafficking from occurring in the first place. The demand for cheap goods and sexual services is what drives trafficking. Efforts should therefore be made to reduce the demand for goods and services produced by trafficked persons and exploited migrants. This requires the engagement of those creating the demand, namely, consumers and businesses. Concrete measures include efforts to encourage, assist or obligate companies to establish decent working conditions for all employees in their supply chains.

Secondly, despite progress in creating legal frameworks to better protect those identified as victims of trafficking, the number of people benefiting from these protection schemes remains small when compared to the estimated millions of people who continue to be trafficked. In order to address this issue, it is important to increase the capacities of Governments and civil society in identifying and assisting all migrants in vulnerable situations, including victims of trafficking. Efforts should also target high-risk locations, such as border-crossing points, as well as sectors and industries in which there is a high risk of trafficking and for which effective responses are urgently required. It is also essential to ensure that anti-trafficking measures are systematically included in all phases of humanitarian action, especially in responding to conflict and disasters.

Thirdly and finally, greater investment is needed if we are to learn from anti-trafficking interventions and draw on the experience and expertise of the anti-trafficking community and others to date with a

view to having informed anti-trafficking responses. We must work towards better collection, standardization and sharing of data on trafficking. We need to find ways to overcome obstacles to data-sharing, within a framework of strict confidentiality and appropriate safeguards so as to protect the personal data of individuals. This can be achieved through the use of multi-stakeholder open-data publishing platforms such as the IOM Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, which will be launched next month.

In conclusion, the Global Plan of Action is an excellent opportunity to reinvigorate our collective efforts. I would like to close by reiterating the deep commitment of the IOM to continuing to work with Member States and our other partners, including entities within the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, with a view to eradicating human trafficking within the overall context of facilitating safe, regular and orderly migration for the benefit of all.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in this high-level meeting.

In accordance with resolution 71/207 of 4 May 2017, we will now hear presentations of summaries by the Chairs of the two interactive panel discussions.

I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Belgium, in his capacity as Chair of interactive panel discussion 1.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytsverve (Belgium): Interactive panel discussion 1 was entitled “The Global Plan of Action and effective partnerships for the prevention and prosecution of trafficking in persons: achievements, gaps and challenges, also taking into consideration the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”. Speakers emphasized the importance of implementing appropriate prevention measures and effective prosecution of trafficking in persons, which constitute two fundamental pillars of the Global Plan of Action, together with protection and partnerships.

Speakers also noted the need to develop and implement holistic and comprehensive responses so as to fully eradicate trafficking in persons. Participants strongly emphasized the urgent need to implement a victim-centred and survivor-based approach to combating trafficking. They urged for an approach that gives priority to the human rights of victims and survivors, places them at the centre of efforts to

shape policy in operational responses and ensures adequate support for survivors' long-term reintegration and recovery.

Speakers also noted that victim protection and assistance were critical in ensuring the effective prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking and recommended that Member States increase their capacity to properly identify and subsequently protect and assist victims. Speakers also underlined the need to understand and address the root causes of trafficking in persons, which include, among other things, poverty, lack of economic opportunity, social-protection flaws, education, gender inequalities and other socioeconomic factors.

Participants recommended giving further attention to the complex interaction of factors that fuel inequality and discrimination and contribute to people's vulnerability to being trafficked. Participants noted that human trafficking is becoming an increasingly common feature in situations of conflict, when vulnerability to trafficking, from gender-based violence to discrimination to lack of economic opportunity, are further intensified.

Speakers noted that impunity, the breakdown of the rule of law and destruction of institutions during conflict significantly increase the conditions in which terrorists and criminal groups exploit the vulnerabilities of individuals, particularly women and children. Speakers recalled the increasing number of women, men and children who embark on dangerous journeys in search of dignity and safety, placing themselves at risk of abuse and exploitation by criminal groups. Participants recalled the close alignment of the commitments adopted by the General Assembly in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016, the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, each of which calls for the eradication of human trafficking in all its forms, among other things.

Finally, speakers, noting that the vast majority of trafficked victims were women and girls, emphasized the gender-based aspect of the phenomenon, urging the international community to address the sexual exploitation of women and girls in all contexts. In this respect, participants called for greater attention to be given to the linkages connecting trafficking, migration and gender, as there are numerous gender-specific vulnerabilities that put women and girls at

particular risk. Here, again, the potential unleashed by implementing Sustainable Development Goal 5 was highlighted by some participants.

The President: I now give the floor to the Chair of the delegation of Qatar, in her capacity as Chair of interactive panel discussion 2.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar): Speakers in interactive panel discussion 2 recalled that trafficking in persons is mentioned in three of the Sustainable Development Goals: Goals 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2. They further noted that trafficking also relates indirectly to many other Sustainable Development Goals and targets in the areas of human rights, migration, crisis resilience and social inclusion, as reflected in the pledge to leave no one behind. Participants also noted the importance of education and awareness-raising campaigns in preventing trafficking in persons, as highlighted in the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 72/1). Above all, participants reaffirmed the importance of political will in the pursuit of multifaceted approaches to ending the crime of trafficking in persons. Speakers also reiterated the urgent need for greater and more predictable resources, including funding, to combat trafficking in persons.

Many speakers also highlighted the important role played by the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and called for enhanced support for the trust fund so as to allow its good work to continue. Participants further stressed the need for specific measures to be taken to address human trafficking resulting from situations of conflict, humanitarian crises and natural disasters. Speakers highlighted the need for systematic responses from the United Nations system, all humanitarian actors and the wide range of actors involved in conflict and crisis-affected areas.

Participants also recognized the particular vulnerability of migrants and refugees to being trafficked and called for them to be afforded greater protection. Speakers noted the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach to the issue of trafficking, addressing all its aspects rather than focusing on individual components. Participants reiterated the need for a greater emphasis on partnerships and coordination. In this respect, speakers emphasized the central role that is played by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and underscored the

important roles played by civil society, academia and the private sector in supporting prevention, protection and prosecution efforts.

Finally, many speakers reiterated the important role that the private sector should play in addressing the issue of consumers and consumer demand as a driver of trafficking.

Statement by the President

The President: I cannot express how disturbed I was by the personal experiences recounted by Grizelda Grootboom, Shireen Ibrahim, Rani Hong and many others. I know that the Assembly was also shocked. I would like to thank Ms. Grootboom, a survivor and advocate, for bravely sharing her experience of being trafficked. Let us not forget Ms. Grootboom's plea to act when she said,

“I really hope that the Global Plan will not be just the action of putting pen to paper, but that it will inspire action in every rural township and city and country” (*A/72/PV.24, p. 9*).

Ms. Grootboom spoke of the hope that the United Nations gives to victims and survivors. The Organization was created for people, not for Governments. We cannot let down her or the millions of other people who are trafficked around the world for billions of dollars. Ms. Mira Sorvino, Goodwill Ambassador Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Fight against Human Trafficking, commented that traffickers treat victims as mercantile goods. Ms. Rani Hong, a former victim who is now an advocate, recalled being taken from her mother at the tender age of seven and sold. We must support the dignity, human rights and humanity of the people who are affected by human trafficking.

As Ms. Hong said, this is a human issue that requires survivor-led solutions. We are all undoubtedly grateful for the Grizelda Grootbooms, Shireen Ibrahims, women and girls and boys and men of the world who are all people who deserve to live a decent and dignified life, without fear of trafficking. But I am particularly grateful to all of the advocates who give voices to the voiceless millions who are subjected to human trafficking.

In the opening segment of this high-level appraisal, we heard from the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, who highlighted the importance of holding

perpetrators accountable. We also adopted a political declaration (resolution 72/1), which represents a strong renewed commitment for action going forward and reaffirmation of the Global Plan of Action. We must turn that gesture into practical action.

At this high-level meeting we heard statements from 98 Member States, whose representatives included some 10 Ministers and seven Deputy Ministers, as well as from six observers. As we just heard from the Chairs of the two interactive panel discussions, the Chairs of the delegations of Qatar and Belgium, the panel discussions were fruitful. However, the true measure of a successful meeting is whether the action points elicited are implemented afterwards. Our work is far from over.

We have essentially asked two questions. How far have we come in combating human trafficking? And how much further do we have to go? The following points were made during this high-level appraisal.

First, millions of people are victims of forced labour, sexual servitude and other forms of exploitation. Trafficking in persons affects the weakest and most vulnerable members of society, including women, girls and boys.

Second, a number of Member States highlighted the importance of using the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and other international instruments in our fight against human trafficking. Many Member States also shared their national plans and laws to combat human trafficking. They noted that it is a serious crime and a violation of fundamental rights.

Third, various Member States called on the Assembly to adopt approaches that are victim-focused, survivor-based, human rights-based, gender-specific and child-sensitive. There was also an emphasis on the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches, awareness-raising campaigns and bilateral, regional and international cooperation.

Fourth, the importance of addressing the root causes and factors contributing to trafficking was highlighted. They include poverty, a lack of education and opportunity and gender inequality. Many speakers pointed out that the increase in conflicts, insecurity and economic uncertainty that has forced millions

to leave their homes makes people vulnerable. Participants called for the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration to address the vulnerability of migrants.

Fifth, Member States reiterated that the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 5, 8 and 16, call on us to end human trafficking, with a particular emphasis on women and children.

Sixth, there were calls for increased access to justice and an emphasis on the importance of disrupting trafficking networks, facilitating prosecution and improving conviction rates of traffickers.

Seventh, many speakers drew attention to the huge profits being made from human trafficking and the need to address both supply and demand.

Finally, the importance of strengthening support for victims, particularly through the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons,

especially women and children, was highlighted. I commend those who have pledged contributions and encourage others to do the same.

In conclusion, we have heard from Member States on the progress made in fighting human trafficking. However, as many have highlighted, much remains to be done across the four pillars of prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership. As we take further action to combat human trafficking, let us keep in mind the fifth P — the reason that the United Nations exists — people.

I declare closed the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 107.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.