

Speech: “Let us stand together as an international community in our commitment to eliminate the abhorrent crime of modern slavery and human trafficking”

Thank you Mr President and thank you to the briefers for updating us following the disturbing news footage we all saw last week showing migrants being sold into slavery in Libya. Today let us stand together as an international community in our commitment to eliminate the abhorrent crime of modern slavery and human trafficking, and safeguard the lives and dignity of those who are most vulnerable.

Like many Libyans in-country, I share the disgust and grave concern at the news footage from last week. I am deeply concerned that civilians continue to suffer inexcusably from the conflict in Libya and that in the absence of the rule of law, they can suffer human rights abuses of the worst kind. I welcome the announcement by the Government of National Accord of Libya of an immediate investigation into this matter and its commitment to ensure that those involved are brought to justice and this vile practice is stopped.

We reaffirm our support – working alongside Libya and international efforts – to bring to account those responsible for such crimes. And we encourage all Member States to continue to work with Libyan authorities in pursuing allegations of human rights abuses to ensure that those individuals responsible are held to account.

After several debates, the Security Council is well informed of the challenges we face in tackling unmanaged migration, including through Libya. We are aware of the real vulnerability of migrants to trafficking and modern slavery. We want migration to be safe, legal and well-managed. We have discussed the need for a comprehensive approach, addressing the root causes of migration, as well as their consequences. And with resolutions 2331 and 2388, we are now well equipped to take action.

Instability creates a permissive environment in which criminal networks exploit civilians and migrants and operate trafficking networks for their own gains, including through the illegal detention of migrants. We will continue to support the Libyan authorities to improve conditions in the centres currently under their control, and to establish oversight of remaining ungoverned centres.

This Council has seen recent progress to revitalise the Libyan political process and take steps forward to stabilising the country. We are clear that the human rights situation in Libya can only be improved sustainably under the stability of a united and representative Government. A safe, secure and

prosperous Libya that is able to confidently tackle the challenges in the region is in all our interests and we continue to support the UN's Action Plan for Libya.

We must all recognise that it is not only the trafficked individuals and their loved ones that are directly affected by this horrendous crime. Violent extremists profit financially from this trade in human misery and use it to fund terrorist activity that affects us all. We must integrate our understanding of trafficking and modern slavery with our efforts to combat terrorism and we must eradicate the use of slavery as a means to resource terrorist groups.

Human rights monitoring and capacity-building of police are central to efforts to build stability and address trafficking by field missions. And, more broadly, we should consider how anti-trafficking is part of a Sustaining Peace agenda, which is all about using a cross-section of UN tools to prevent conflict and build peace. It is clear that trafficking itself can only be addressed through a holistic, cross-pillar approach by the UN.

As is always the case with today's frantic news cycles, the reports from Libya which have so shocked us all will soon be displaced by other headlines and drop off the news agenda altogether eventually. While that is to be expected, we should hold ourselves to a higher standard of responsibility: The fact that slavery continues in the 21st century despite all the progress that has been made in defending human rights is reprehensible. Let us commit to work together to preserve our attention on this issue and sustain our action to ensure this practice does not continue in Libya or anywhere else. It is only by doing so that we can hope to succeed in the maintenance of international peace and security. Mr President if members of this council consider a statement would be helpful then we would be happy to work with them on such a text.

Thank you.