**Statement of Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences to Open Ministerial Security Council debate on trafficking in persons in conflict situations: forced labour, slavery and other similar practices**

**14 March 2017**

Mr President, the UN SG, Distinguished Members of the Council. Honourable Ministers and Other distinguished representatives

It is an honour for me to brief you today in my capacity as the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences. I thank the Government of the UK for convening this open debate and for the invitation to participate, as well as for its leadership in combatting modern slavery. I also thank the SC for the increased attention given to the issues of human trafficking, forced labour, slavery and slavery-like practices in conflict situations.

Mr President, my predecessor in the mandate and I have conducted numerous country visits to meet with a broad range of government, civil society organisations and survivors to assess the prevalence of slavery and related practices in contravention of the Slavery Convention of 1926, the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956. Member States have a duty to uphold the universal protection against slavery and the slave trade and to bring to justice perpetrators who violate this norm.

Despite this slavery and related practices continue to occur on an unprecedented scale affecting millions of men, women and children. In conflict situations non-state armed groups who have gained territorial control within countries have reverted to the most extreme forms of slavery in which girls and young women are owned, exploited, sold and traded in markets and on the internet. Boys have been forced to carry arms and commit acts of violence against their own communities. We also see private sector extractive companies taking advantage of conflict situations to exploit natural resources, and subjecting people to forced labour to extract huge profits.

A year ago my mandate and the special rapporteurs on the right to health and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography conducted a joint country mission to Nigeria where we met with young men who had been forced to carry arms, engage in combat, destroy their own villages and perform forced labour in the form of cleaning and construction work during captivity by Boko Haram. We met girls in IDP camps who had babies as a result of forced marriage and sexual slavery but are unable to return to their communities as they are ostracised for being wives of BH and their children despised as being of “bad blood”. Despite significant government and civil society efforts they continue to be affected by gaps in physical and psychological health care, food security, education, livelihood support and access to justice. These gaps can fuel an increasingly cycle of violence where girls are vulnerable to being forced into prostitution to earn a living or in the worst case scenario, to conduct suicide bombings.

What can the Security Council do?

Firstly, it can ensure that the multiple ways in which slavery, forced labour and trafficking all intersect in conflict has a coherent global, multi-faceted response with strong leadership within the UN system through continued attention to these issues and oversight of the UN and its member states’ responses.

In this regard I would urge member states to engage with Alliance 8.7, a multi-stakeholder partnership offering a way for states, UN actors, civil society, regional organizations and business to come together to implement target 8.7 of the SDGs, which calls for the eradication of child labour, forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. Achieving SDG 8.7 is a pre-condition for achieving many of the other SDGs, principally those on gender equality and economic empowerment, on the right to health and peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Secondly, it can strengthen the normative framework for ending slavery, forced labour and human trafficking including through promoting increased ratifications of international human rights norms and standards, including the ILO’s Forced Labour Protocol No. 29. Member States should be reminded to ensure that dedicated legislation to ensure the implementation of international standards is backed up with robust national action plans to achieve effective implementation that brings together the role of law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, the judiciary, as well as state services that can support rehabilitation, reintegration of victims and adequate reparations for their human rights violations. The 1956 Supplementary Convention requires ratifying states to inform the UN SG of the laws passed to prohibit slavery and criminalise enslavement and he can hold states accountable for this and I would encourage Security Council members to support him in upholding this role.

Thirdly, the Council can ensure strengthening of humanitarian responses as well as exercising the fullest financial and economic measures to stem the transnational corruption and crime that fuels conflict.

Lastly, the Security Council can promote national and international criminal justice to bring criminals to account, including for enslavement that constitutes crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Mr President, access to justice remains a remote prospect for the millions subjected trafficking, forced labour and slavery in conflict. Together with prevention, protection and support for survivors this is a prerequisite for the restoration of peace and security. In this regard, I would urge member states to provide funding for the UN Voluntary Trust Fund on contemporary forms of slavery, which is prioritizing projects that provide specialized assistance to women and children subjected to slavery in conflict and humanitarian crises.

I thank you for your attention.