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Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution [46/122](#), provides an overview of the work of the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery, in particular the recommendations for grants to beneficiary organizations that were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the fund at its twenty-fourth session, held in Geneva from 25 to 29 November 2019. It also provides information on other recommendations adopted by the Board and activities related to the fund.

* [A/75/150](#).

** The present document was submitted late to the conference services without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution [53/208](#) B.



I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution [46/122](#), by which it established the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery. It provides the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the fund at its twenty-fourth session, held in Geneva from 25 to 29 November 2019. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved those recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General on 13 January 2020.

B. Mandate of the fund

2. In line with resolution [46/122](#), the fund was established with the purpose of extending humanitarian, legal and financial aid to individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. The fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations, private or public entities and individuals.

C. Administration of the fund and Board of Trustees

3. The Secretary-General administers the fund through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with the advice of a board of trustees and in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

4. The Board of Trustees is composed of five members with relevant experience in the field of human rights, in particular issues of contemporary forms of slavery. They serve in their personal capacity and are appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution. The Board is currently composed of Danwood Mzikenge Chirwa (Malawi), Leonardo Sakamoto (Brazil), Georgina Vaz Cabral (France) and Nevena Vučković Šahović (Serbia). Ms. Vaz Cabral was reappointed as Chair of the Board at its twenty-fourth session. On 31 December 2019, Renu Rajbhandari (Nepal) completed her second and final term as Board member. On 10 July 2020, Mr. Sakamoto and Ms. Vučković-Šahović completed their second and final terms as Board members. Three new candidates will be appointed in the course of 2020.

II. Management of grants

A. Admissibility criteria

5. In accordance with the mandate of the fund as set out in resolution [46/122](#), the beneficiaries of assistance from the fund are individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the fund guidelines. Project proposals should be aimed at the delivery of assistance services to beneficiaries who are victims of contemporary forms of slavery and, when applicable, members of their families. As indicated in the fund guidelines, contemporary forms of slavery that qualify for project grants include traditional slavery, serfdom, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage, the worst forms of child labour, forced and early marriage, the sale of wives and inherited widows, trafficking in persons and human organs, sexual slavery, sale

of children, commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in armed conflict.

6. Priority in allocating grants is accorded to projects implemented by civil society organizations that aim at providing rehabilitation, reparation, empowerment and integration services to victims of contemporary forms of slavery through direct assistance. This may include medical, psychological, social, legal, humanitarian and educational assistance, vocational or skills training or other assistance in support of an independent livelihood. Detailed information on the types of assistance provided to victims through the projects financed by the fund, as well as on their impact on the lives of the beneficiaries, is available from the OHCHR website.¹

7. By 1 March 2019, the deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2020, the fund had received 93 applications. After the applications were screened by the secretariat of the fund, 76, amounting to \$2,128,586 in requests for direct assistance to victims, were declared admissible and were examined by the Board at its twenty-fourth session (see paras. 15–17). Priority was given to project applications intended to assist victims of contemporary forms of slavery in the context of supply and value chains, project proposals for assisting women and children, and projects operating in conflict and humanitarian crisis scenarios.

8. The deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2021 was 1 March 2020. By the close of the call, the fund had received 80 applications. After the applications were screened by the secretariat of the fund, 61, amounting to \$1,594,042 in requests for direct assistance to victims, were declared admissible and will be examined by the Board at its twenty-fifth session, to be held in Geneva from 23 to 27 November 2020. In 2021, priority will be given to project applications that contribute to achieving target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals,² in particular project applications intended to assist victims of contemporary forms of slavery in the context of supply and value chains and projects operating in conflict and humanitarian crisis scenarios.

B. Monitoring and evaluation by the secretariat of the fund

9. At its twenty-fourth session, the Board was presented with 76 admissible applications for project grants to be awarded for activities to be implemented in 2020. Of those, 31 had been evaluated through on-site visits by staff of the secretariat of the fund, OHCHR field presence, human rights components of peacekeeping missions and Board members in previous years. On-site technical evaluation visits to applicant organizations are a crucial aspect of the fund. The visits provide a first-hand opportunity to verify new applicants, monitor activities supported by the fund over a number of years, verify financial files, interview victims, provide constructive feedback to grantees and produce comprehensive reports.

III. Financial situation of the fund

10. The Board members and the secretariat of the fund pursued fundraising and outreach efforts. The fund increased its funding in 2019 to a total of \$856,661 (slightly less than its peak income of \$886,000 in 2009). Nevertheless, underfunding remains

¹ See www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund.

² Target 8.7 reads: “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms”.

a major issue. Since 2002, the fund has received a total of \$11.6 million in contributions from Member States, which represents an average yearly income of \$644,444. However, to fulfil its mandate meaningfully and respond adequately to the needs of victims by funding all deserving project applications, the fund would require at least \$2 million in contributions each year. The contributions received in 2019 for 2020 covered only 43 per cent of that target. The fund aims to reach the symbolic ceiling of \$1 million, encouraged by the positive feedback on its operations received from an increasing number of State representatives.

11. The table below shows the contributions and pledges received in 2019.

Contributions and pledges received in 2019

(United States dollars)

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
Australia	102 698	16 December
Germany	203 016	15 July, 26 November and 17 December
Holy See	5 000	23 January and 13 February
India	50 000	20 March
Luxembourg	16 411	11 October
Portugal	22 002	24 December
Qatar	30 000	10 October
Republic of Korea	50 000	26 June
Saudi Arabia	75 000	23 May
Spain	27 502	11 December
Turkey	10 000	16 December
United Arab Emirates	30 000	9 April
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	233 320	31 January and 19 December
Public donation	1 712	20 February
Total	856 661	

IV. Twenty-fourth session of the Board of Trustees

12. The twenty-fourth session of the Board of Trustees was held in Geneva from 25 to 29 November 2019. On 28 November, the fund convened a panel discussion entitled “Breaking the chains: eradicating slavery through the Sustainable Development Goals” to commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (see paras. 21–23). In addition, the Board held a working session with representatives of the fund grantees from four regions to discuss challenges and share good practices of the victim-centred approach to deliver assistance and empower slavery survivors in the context of supply chains, rule of law and governance, migration, and conflict and humanitarian crisis. In terms of challenges, the fund grantees underlined major threats faced by non-governmental organizations and trade unions trying to rescue and assist victims. They also stressed difficulties in: obtaining legal redress for indigenous peoples deprived of their lands and submitted to bonded and forced labour in palm oil plantations (Guatemala); establishing protection mechanisms for migrant workers submitted to forced labour in Kurdistan Region (Iraq); community engagement in the fight against descent-based slavery (Mauritania); and identifying and assisting victims of trafficking (Viet Nam). The fund grantees also shared information on the following good practices: empowerment

through trade unions and capacity-building (Guatemala); prevention through the use of social media for raising awareness (Iraq); mobilizing community engagement (Mauritania); and building partnerships with the private sector to deliver holistic assistance (Viet Nam). All organizations and the Board underlined the importance of actively integrating survivors of slavery into programme design and delivery.

13. In addition, in line with the mission statement adopted on 26 November 2016 (A/71/272, para. 27), the Board continued to pursue closer coordination with other actors in the field of contemporary forms of slavery. The Board also held a meeting with representatives of the International Labour Organization (ILO), serving as secretariat to the Alliance 8.7 initiative and advisor to the Alliance 8.7 Chair. The Board also held a meeting with the High Commissioner for Human Rights to discuss means to increase the contribution of OHCHR to global anti-slavery efforts, in particular within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to raise the profile of the fund. The Board continued to have exchanges with OHCHR staff members who support special procedures of the Human Rights Council on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and its consequences, the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, and trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Board also exchanged with OHCHR staff members of the Rule of Law, Equality and Non-discrimination Branch on ways of improving outreach in relation to organizations assisting victims of trafficking and of early child marriage in Roma communities.

14. A Board member, Mr. Sakamoto, participated in the panel discussion on “Finance against slavery: how government action and public-private partnerships can work to end modern slavery and human trafficking”, convened within the framework of the eighth session of the Forum on Business and Human Rights, held in Geneva from 25 to 27 November 2019.

A. Grant-making recommendations

15. Following a thorough intersessional evaluation of admissible project proposals by the secretariat of the fund, the Board was presented at its twenty-fourth session with 76 applications for project grants to assist victims of contemporary forms of slavery worldwide, amounting to \$2,128,586. The Board accorded priority to the review of project proposals that had been highly recommended for funding by the secretariat of the fund. Through a competitive review based on both geographical and thematic criteria, it recommended the approval of 37 project grants, for a total of \$674,000. Those recommendations were approved by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of the Secretary-General on 13 January 2020. Six additional highly recommended projects proposals – totalling \$90,000 – could not be financed owing to a lack of available funding.

16. In 2020, through the 37 grants, the fund will assist non-governmental organizations in 33 countries distributed as follows: 11 in Asia and the Pacific; 11 in Africa; 4 in Eastern Europe; 5 in Latin America and the Caribbean; and 6 in the Group of Western European and other States. Through those grants, more than 15,300 victims are expected to receive redress and rehabilitation services after having been subjected to contemporary forms of slavery, such as the worst forms of child labour, domestic servitude, bonded and forced labour, sexual exploitation and forced and early marriage. For example, the fund will support the non-governmental organization Challenging Heights with the implementation of a project in Ghana to provide psychological, social, educational and humanitarian assistance to 135 child victims of trafficking for forced labour in the fishing industry on Lake Volta. In Nepal, the organization Pourakhi will provide legal assistance, counselling and shelter homes to

250 migrant workers victims of domestic servitude. An Albanian organization, Different and Equal, will provide psychological, medical and legal support to 80 victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labour. In Brazil, the Centro de Apoio e Pastoral do Migrante will provide legal, humanitarian assistance and vocational training to 80 victims of forced labour in the textile industry.

17. Figures I and II below illustrate the breakdown of the 37 approved grants in 2020, by region and by type of contemporary form of slavery.

Figure I
Grants awarded for 2020, by region

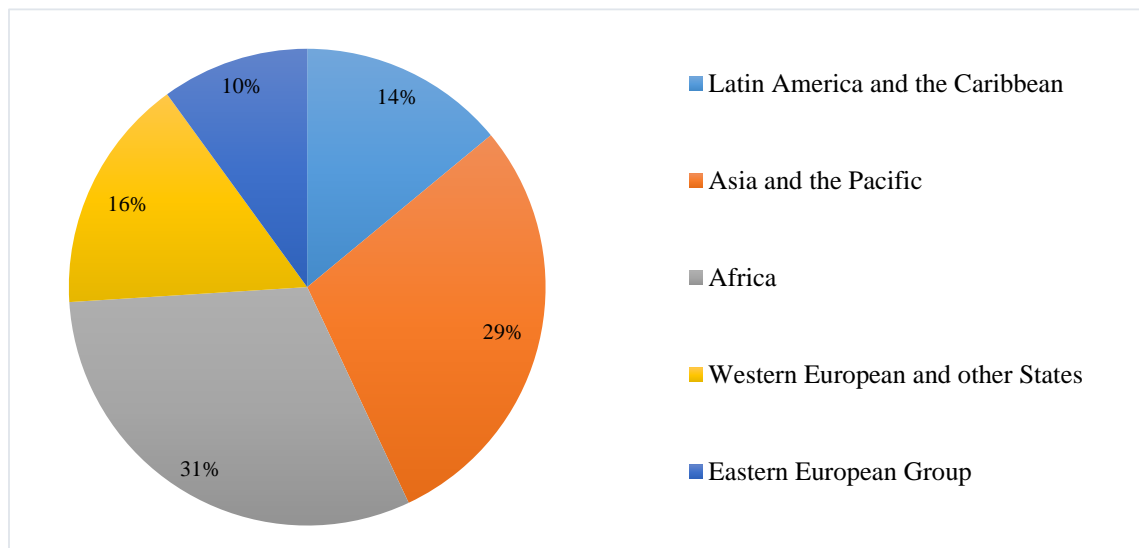
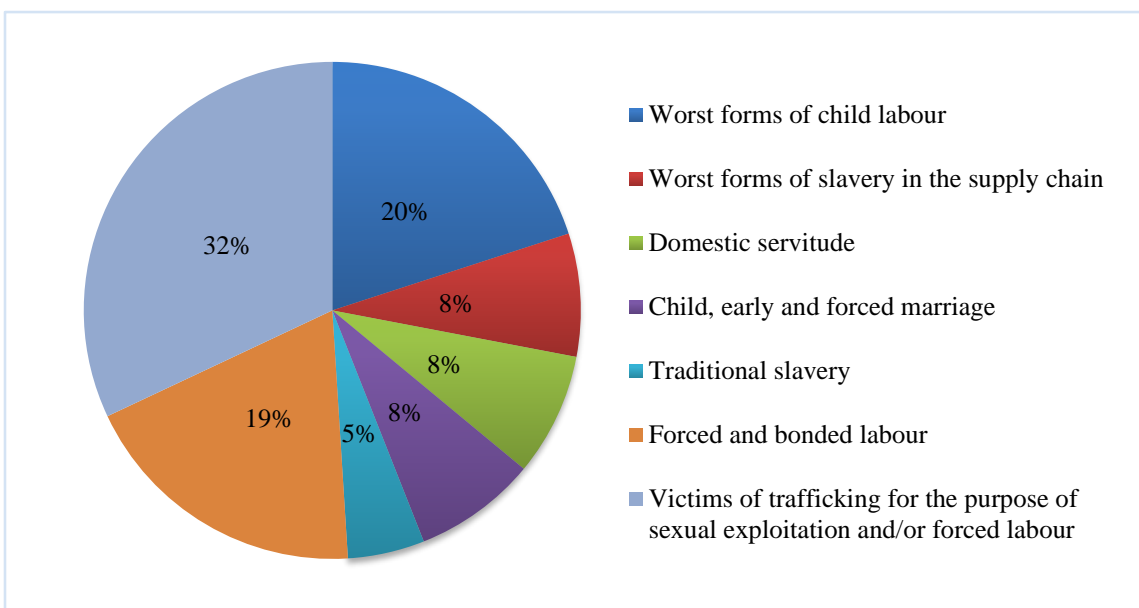


Figure II
Grants awarded for 2020, by type of contemporary form of slavery



B. Policy recommendations

18. At its twenty-fourth session, the Board considered ways to improve the visibility of the fund, in particular for fundraising purposes. The Board also agreed to introduce language on safeguards against sexual exploitation and abuse, in particular safeguards ensuring child protection from such abuses by its grantees, in line with the United Nations protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners. The Board also recommended continuing to hold an annual public event in commemoration of the abolition of slavery, as a way of raising awareness and sharing knowledge and best practices in the field of rehabilitation and redress for victims of slavery.

19. Recalling that the fund will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary in 2021, the Board approved a concept note for the commemoration involving the compilation of stories of slavery survivors assisted by the fund who had not only recovered but also become agents of change. The fund secretariat will also conduct a stocktaking exercise of the fund achievements over the past three decades in order to better serve the beneficiaries in decades to come.

20. The Board recommended continuing to work actively to build global partnerships against slavery in coordination with relevant special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and human rights treaty bodies. Increased cooperation will help to ensure that United Nations mechanisms working towards the eradication of slavery have complementary roles, notably in monitoring the situation, formulating recommendations and assisting victims affected by it. The Board underlined the major contribution that the fund could make to achieving target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommended continuing to engage with the Alliance 8.7 secretariat and relevant partners. These recommendations were approved by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of the Secretary-General on 13 January 2020.

C. International Day for the Abolition of Slavery and panel discussion on rehabilitation for victims of slavery

21. To commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, on 2 December, the fund convened in Geneva on 28 November 2019 a panel discussion entitled “Breaking the chains: eradicating slavery through the Sustainable Development Goals”. The High Commissioner for Human Rights delivered a keynote address and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Elizabeth Wilde, moderated the panel. The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, Urmila Bhoola, and the Alliance 8.7 secretariat representative and Head of the ILO Advocacy and Partnerships Unit, Thomas Wissing, also participated. The following civil society representatives presented their work within the Sustainable Development Goals framework to deliver services to slavery survivors and eradicate the practice: Helmer Leonel Velásquez Herrera, lawyer, Guatemalan National Council for Displaced Persons (Guatemala); Hoshyar Malo, Director, Kurdish Human Rights Watch (Iraq); Salimata Lam, National Coordinator, SOS Esclaves (Mauritania); and Diep N. Vuong, President and co-founder, Pacific Links Foundation (Viet Nam). Those organizations and rehabilitation centres are all current grantees of the fund. Representatives of the following Member States attended the event: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Germany, Georgia, Guatemala, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Mali, Mauritania, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Spain, Tunisia, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Representatives of the Commonwealth, the Order of Malta, civil society and the United Nations also

attended. Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom contributed financially to make the event possible.

22. Panellists highlighted that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represented an opportunity to greatly accelerate efforts to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery. They highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as Alliance 8.7, to galvanize support and resources in order to achieve target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Discussions focused on the four priority areas defined by the thematic Action Groups of Alliance 8.7: rule of law and governance; supply chains; migration; and conflicts and humanitarian settings. The High Commissioner for Human Rights underlined that target 8.7 served as a framework for all stakeholders, including victims of slavery, to build alliance. She also emphasized the need to address the root causes of slavery, pointing to structural discrimination as a contributing factor. She stressed the importance of placing victims at the centre of the action to end slavery and called for increased financial support to the fund. The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, thanked the secretariat of the fund and the Board of Trustees for the support provided during the six years of her mandate tenure. She stressed the importance of the fund work and commended civil society organizations for the provision of direct holistic services to victims of slavery.

23. During the panel discussion, the fund grantees provided a direct account of the linkages between slavery and the Sustainable Development Goals through their first-hand experience working with victims. A video testimony of a Vietnamese woman who had survived trafficking illustrated the exposure of victims to multiple forms of human rights violations and abuse. Practitioners also shared their experiences in delivering medical, psychological, social, legal and humanitarian assistance to victims of contemporary forms of slavery. They recognized progress in the identification, care, rehabilitation and reintegration of slavery victims. They also suggested means for building trust with victims and empowering them, such as establishing community groups and trade unions, organizing capacity-building programmes, adopting protection measures to enhance their safety and providing tailored holistic and long-term assistance. Participants underscored the need to address the root causes of slavery, including poverty, social inequalities, land dispossession, systemic racism and the cultural traditions underpinning descent-based slavery. They emphasized the importance of upholding the rule of law in order to tackle persistent impunity and corruption, and to ensure accountability and redress for victims. They noted that a stronger legislative and institutional framework was also required, notably for eradicating slavery from supply chains. The expert practitioners called for greater visibility of the issue of slavery, in particular in conflict and humanitarian crisis contexts, stronger monitoring and protection mechanisms and a broader range of partnerships with corporate actors. A public debate followed the panellists' presentations.

V. How to contribute to the fund

24. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities are invited to contribute to the fund. Donors should indicate "For the slavery fund, account SH" on a payment order. For more information on how to contribute and further details about the fund, donors are requested to contact the secretariat of the fund at the following address.

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VI. Conclusions and recommendations

25. **The Board of Trustees, jointly with the secretariat of the fund, has stepped up outreach initiatives to increase the visibility of the fund and enhance coordination with other actors involved in the eradication of all forms of slavery, in particular the special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and Alliance 8.7.**

26. **The interest generated by the yearly thematic workshops convened by the fund is proof of the need for knowledge-sharing in the field of assistance to victims of slavery. The panel discussions on the eradication of slavery through the Sustainable Development Goals highlighted progress made in the identification, care and reintegration of victims and the importance of empowering victims through their active participation in programme design and delivery, community engagement, awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes. The panel discussions also underlined the importance of addressing the root causes of slavery, in particular poverty, social inequalities, land dispossession and systemic racism, and of tackling persistent impunity and corruption to ensure accountability and redress for victims.**

27. **Member States and other stakeholders, in particular the private sector, are urged to contribute to the fund as a concrete manifestation of their commitment to eliminating slavery and achieving target 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The fund would need to receive \$2 million on a yearly basis to respond adequately to the demand for assistance received through project applications.**