



# General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

**38<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting

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New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Shahid ..... (Maldives)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Manalo (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

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

### Agenda item 108 (continued)

#### Crime prevention and criminal justice

**The Acting President:** Before we begin with the list of speakers, I would like to remind members of important organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of the plenary meetings. The introduction of the pre-recorded statements will be made by the representatives from their national seats. Due to time constraints, it is expected that the introductory remarks will be kept concise. Statements delivered by the high-level representatives who are physically present in the Assembly Hall can be made from the national seats or the rostrum. As set out in resolution 75/283, statements will be limited to three minutes for individual delegations and five minutes for statements made on behalf of a group of States. In the case of pre-recorded statements, introductory remarks and the length of the video itself shall be counted in the allocated time limit.

In accordance with decision 76/511, in addition to the verbatim records of the high-level meeting, the President of the General Assembly will circulate as a document of the Assembly a compilation document of the statements delivered by means of pre-recorded

statements during the high-level meeting and submitted to the President no later than the day on which the pre-recorded statement is played in the Assembly Hall, and such pre-recorded statements will be attached to the verbatim records of the meeting. Submissions in that regard should be made to [eStatements@un.org](mailto:eStatements@un.org).

I now call on the Minister of Social Welfare of Sierra Leone.

**Ms. Dansama-Kamara** (Sierra Leone): My delegation welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting. The clarion call to combat trafficking in persons is as loud today as it was when the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons was adopted some 11 years ago. The impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic on our economies has further compounded the incentives that drive our young people to make the perilous journey to other countries in search of greener pastures.

We are not in any way minimizing our collective global efforts, but more needs to be done, bearing in mind that none of our countries are immunized against the entrenched global menace of trafficking in persons. We are all culpable, whether as countries of origin, countries of transit or countries of destination. Let us therefore unite in our fight to address the forcing of our women and girls into sexual exploitation, servitude, coercion and abduction.

Even with the limited resources we have to confront that monstrous menace, we can continue to be more innovative and creative in our collective and national approaches to realize the aspirations of the Global Plan

In accordance with decision 76/511, of 29 October 2021, the official records of the high-level meeting will be supplemented by annexes containing pre-recorded statements submitted by Heads of State or Government or other dignitaries, submitted to the President no later than the day on which such statements are delivered in the Assembly Hall. Submissions in this regard should be made to [estatements@un.org](mailto:estatements@un.org).



of Action. For us in Sierra Leone, we have adopted the following approaches to enhance our fight against trafficking in persons in support of the global initiative.

First, we have strengthened the legal environment to punish perpetrators and more effectively protect survivors. We have adopted a zero-tolerance stance on all forms of trafficking through prevention, prosecution and survivor protection and, in that respect, have adopted the following measures.

We have endorsed the anti-human trafficking and migrant smuggling bill of 2021, which, if enacted, will ensure tougher punishment for perpetrators and better survivor and witness-protection services. We have reviewed our national action plan against trafficking for the period from 2021 to 2023 to reflect greater protection for women and children. And we have launched a labour immigration policy as the basis for legislation on overseas employment.

Secondly, we have deepened regional coordination through more effective information-sharing. We are determined to lead collaboration in the subregions of the Economic Community of West African States and the Mano River Union.

In that connection, we expect to convene a national conference to better integrate the practical, academic and policy initiatives to creatively tackle issues such as increasing the ability of communities to seek support for suspected cases and removing the stigmatization associated with survivors. The national conference is expected to be followed by a regional conference to promote collaboration and information-sharing within the region.

Lastly, permit me to highlight that, given the steady progress made so far, a recent report reveals that Sierra Leone has moved to Tier 2 on the global ranking Watch List.

Let me conclude by reminding all of us that trafficking does not respect borders. We must stay one step ahead, both to make trafficking risky for perpetrators and to provide better support services for survivors. The fight is on our doorstep. We must act now and act very fast.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce a statement by the Deputy Minister of Justice and Correctional Services of South Africa.

**Ms. Babedi** (South Africa): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded message of His Excellency Mr. John Jefferey, Deputy Minister of Justice and Correctional Services of the Republic of South Africa.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex I and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom to introduce a statement by the Minister of State for the Commonwealth, the United Nations and South Asia.

**Ms. White** (United Kingdom): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded message of Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for the Commonwealth, the United Nations and South Asia.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex II and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Chile to introduce a statement by the Under-Secretary of the Interior of Chile.

**Mr. Skoknic Tapia** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded message of His Excellency Mr. Juan Francisco Galli, Undersecretary of the Interior of Chile, on the occasion of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex III and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine to introduce a statement by the Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine for European Integration.

**Mr. Prytula** (Ukraine): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded message of Her Excellency Ms. Olga Revuk, Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine for European Integration.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex IV and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Canada to introduce a statement by the Deputy Minister of Public Safety of Canada.

**Mr. Mead (Canada):** On behalf of Canada, I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded message of Mr. Robert Stewart, Deputy Minister of Public Safety of Canada.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex V and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal to introduce a statement by the Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality of Portugal.

**Mr. Cunha de Eça Valente (Portugal):** I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded message of Ms. Rosa Monteiro, Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality of Portugal.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex VI and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Italy.

**Mr. Della Vedova (Italy):** Italy welcomes the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons as well as the adoption of the related Political Declaration (resolution 76/7).

We align ourselves with the statement by the observer of the European Union (see A/76/PV.37) and would like to add some remarks in our national capacity.

We value this meeting as an important occasion to assess our achievements, acknowledge existing gaps and identify continuous and evolving challenges, including the implementation of relevant legal instruments. What is happening at the Polish-Belarusian border is the latest example of how States can use immigrants in a cynical and manipulative way, in addition to mercilessly exploiting the limits and weaknesses of the tools we have at our disposal to respond in an effective manner.

More than 20 years have passed since the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime opened for signature in Palermo, together with two of its three Protocols. The first of those Protocols was the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which has provided Member States with the necessary legal frameworks to define, criminalize and

prevent that appalling phenomenon. If we are today more aware of that phenomenon and more prepared to counter it, it is notably thanks to the Protocol. That is all the more reason for Member States to fully engage in the review mechanism of the Palermo Convention and its Protocols.

Notwithstanding the ongoing international efforts, trafficking in persons continues to be a terrible scourge that may assume different forms, therefore making it more difficult to detect. Modern-day slavery remains a persistent and growing threat to human rights around the globe. Sex trafficking victims continue to represent the majority of victims of trafficking, while an increasing share of detected victims are trafficked for forced labour.

The coronavirus disease has exacerbated the conditions that put individuals at risk of falling prey to traffickers. The most vulnerable, the most marginalized and the most impoverished are especially exposed: women, girls, increasingly also boys, children in general, irregular migrants and domestic workers.

Italy recognizes the additional risks of human trafficking and exploitation along migration routes and is fully committed to preventing and countering them. In that regard, Italy is proud to have contributed over the years, within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to the organization of a series of simulation-based exercises to improve the capacities of origin, transit and destination countries for detecting the phenomenon, prosecuting perpetrators and protecting victims.

Italy also devotes special attention, *inter alia*, to tackling illicit labour mediation, especially in the agricultural sector, reducing the risk of forced labour, and identifying and assisting unaccompanied minor migrants. At the same time, there is a strong commitment by the Italian authorities, in cooperation with civil society, to promote a human rights-based and gender- and age-sensitive approach. Rest assured that the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons will continue to drive Italy's efforts in this domain.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of India to introduce a statement by the Minister of State for Home Affairs of the Republic of India.

**Mr. Sharma** (India): I have the honour to introduce a pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Ajay Kumar Mishra, Minister of State for Home Affairs of the Republic of India.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex VII and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce a statement by the Chairperson of the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons.

**Ms. Hassan** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to introduce a pre-recorded statement by the Chairperson of the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons of Egypt.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex VIII and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to Mrs. Sandy Guadalupe Recinos Acevedo de Cabrera, Executive Director of the Secretariat Against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons of Guatemala.

**Mrs. Recinos Acevedo de Cabrera** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my country and the Government of His Excellency Mr. Alejandro Giammattei Falla, I wish to express our congratulations on the adoption at this high-level meeting of the 2021 Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 76/7). Guatemala reaffirms its commitment to the fight against human trafficking, a crime that seriously violates human rights and has the demonstrated ability of adapting to any situation to take advantage of human vulnerabilities.

The humanitarian crisis that arose as a result of the coronavirus disease pandemic caused an increase in the risk of crime in Guatemala through the misuse of technological tools, such as the Internet, to capture and exploit victims, especially children and adolescents. The crisis also showed us that, against the extraordinary backdrop of human mobility, Guatemala, in addition to being a country of origin, transit and destination for victims of trafficking, is a country of return for

migrants, who represent a highly vulnerable group with respect to traffickers.

In the face of those circumstances, we demonstrated our firm will and commitment to effectively tackle human trafficking by implementing strategies and actions that represent my country's progress in preventing, combating and punishing crime.

Allow me to mention several of those initiatives, including the Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking, which is the most significant awareness-raising initiative in terms of duration and scope and has allowed us to strengthen the commitment of key intervention actors, such as State authorities, civil society organizations and community leaders. We have created a mobile units project, a unique and innovative initiative in the country and the region for preventing sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking in persons. Mobile units raise the awareness of communities in their own setting and language and in the places with the highest incidence.

Currently, faced with the challenge of the increasing misuse of information and communication technologies, the "*Me conecto sin clavos*" project was launched, which consists of three digital tools that seek to promote the safety and protection of children and adolescents in cyberspace.

In the area of prosecution and punishment of this serious crime, Guatemala serves as a reference in the region, as it has specialized institutions in the public ministry and the National Civilian Police, as well as tribunals and courts of law, with specialized competence in human trafficking crimes. We also have an inter-institutional commission made up of 32 State institutions, civil society organizations and international cooperation agencies, with which we work to coordinate actions to prevent, combat and sanction this crime and to provide care to and repatriate victims and survivors.

At the regional level, Guatemala chairs the Regional Coalition against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, in which nine countries unite for the same cause and with a solid commitment. Even so, we are aware that Guatemala has many challenges in the face of this heinous crime. We will, however, continue to join efforts to fight human trafficking and organized crime in addition to international cooperation efforts and global initiatives with the United Nations.



In conclusion, we are of the view that the following is one of the challenges that we must work on: the establishment of actions at the national and regional levels that respond to the changes caused by the pandemic, especially those related to the risks faced by children and adolescents in this new technological era.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to Ms. Dina Dominitz, National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator of the Ministry of Justice of Israel.

**Ms. Dominitz (Israel):** It is a great honour for me to take part in the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Israel continues to play a leading role in global efforts to combat trafficking in persons and is recognized as a leader in the field. We have accomplished outstanding achievements — including the full eradication of the severe form of trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation that was prevalent — and have developed innovative and sustainable mechanisms, legislation and tools aimed at preventing trafficking, targeting the demand that fosters those heinous crimes, and prosecuting those who facilitate or profit from the exploitation of victims and holding them accountable.

We are particularly proud of our victim-centred and trauma-informed holistic protection and care frameworks for victims, which include a dedicated forfeiture fund for the compensation of and aid to victims of trafficking for diverse causes. Those accomplishments are due to the consistent and determined actions of the Israeli authorities, together with strong collaborative relationships forged with civil society and international partners, in accordance with our new national plan of action.

Nevertheless, we still have considerable challenges and have experienced, as have many other countries worldwide, the disproportionate impact that the coronavirus disease pandemic has had on vulnerable populations, especially women and children, which has exacerbated the risks of and exposure to exploitation and trafficking.

In response to this crisis, Israel is focusing on strengthening coordination, both internally and internationally; prioritizing prevention and intensifying protection actions for vulnerable populations; harnessing technology that is misused by perpetrators in order to combat trafficking in the

cyber arena; increasing identification; and enhancing data collection.

Human trafficking exists in all our countries. It binds us in the worst of ways. Israel remains fully committed to combining forces with the global community to end trafficking in persons and modern slavery in all its ugly forms.

I would like to end with a quote of former Chief Justice Dorit Beinisch of the Israeli Supreme Court: “Gone are the dark days in which one person could be viewed as the property of another person. A human being is born free and his or her right to liberty is a fundamental human right”.

I thank you, Mr. President, and wish us all a productive meeting.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Australia to introduce a statement by the Ambassador for People Smuggling and Human Trafficking.

**Mr. Kelson (Australia):** I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of Ms. Lucienne Manton, Australian Ambassador for People Smuggling and Human Trafficking.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex IX and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to Mrs. Kari Johnstone, Acting Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the United States of America.

**Mrs. Johnstone (United States of America):** It is a great privilege for United States Congressman French Hill and me to be here to appraise our collective progress in implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons which was adopted here 11 years ago and complements the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic affects every aspect of our lives, including the capacity of Governments to address important issues such as poverty, social and economic inequalities, the risks associated with migration and climate change. That is also true in the context of preventing and combating human trafficking and providing assistance and protection to victims and survivors. Like all

Governments, the United States has faced challenges in our anti-trafficking responses over the last year; yet there are promising practices and new initiatives that I am pleased to highlight today.

Let me first outline a couple of challenges at the federal level. Amid pandemic-related court closures and the suspension of grand jury proceedings, the prosecutions and convictions of traffickers decreased. Trafficking victims and survivors also encountered increased obstacles in accessing services and obtaining employment. Despite the impact of the pandemic, there has been progress in the United States, including an overall increase in the number of human trafficking investigations and the capability of law enforcement to conduct remote forensic interviews.

Last year, the United States Congress passed several laws addressing human trafficking and related crimes, including laws that allow for the first time compensation for members of the survivor-led United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking. Let me note how thrilled I am to see survivors' expertise so prominently featured in this high-level meeting. I thank the survivors for contributing their expertise to improve our policies and our practices.

In line with the Biden-Harris Administration's Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, we are prioritizing addressing racial discrimination in our domestic and international anti-trafficking responses. The President's Inter-agency Task Force, which is charged with coordinating United States inter-agency efforts, plays a key role in that important effort. We are also engaging survivor leaders and other experts on the relationship between human trafficking and racial inequity to inform that effort.

On the international front, the Program to End Modern Slavery, which the United States first announced here in 2017 (see A/71/PV.73), is pioneering approaches to combat human trafficking by combining cutting-edge research with targeted programming to rigorously test prevalence research methods and the effectiveness of human trafficking interventions. Grantees have received \$125 million in 17 countries globally to implement anti-trafficking programmes, representing one of the largest United States Government investments to combat human trafficking.

In conclusion, I want to announce two important new tools. First, my office recently launched a

comprehensive resource guide that was developed by experts, including survivor leaders, for Government officials and other key stakeholders to establish and improve trauma-informed anti-trafficking measures in a COVID-19 environment.

Secondly, the United States will soon release our updated National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, reflecting the Biden-Harris Administration's approach to addressing trafficking. It assigns a higher priority to advancing racial and gender equity, workers' rights, fair trade and support for underserved communities. We thank all stakeholders, including survivor leaders, who helped to shape this important national action plan.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of France to introduce a statement by the Ambassador for Transnational Crime Threats.

**Mr. Gellet** (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce Mr. Jean-Claude Brunet, Ambassador for Transnational Crime Threats, who will speak on behalf of France.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex X and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to introduce a statement by the Head of the National Office against Organized Crime and the Financing of Terrorism of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of Mr. Joel Adrián Mena Sorett, Head of the National Office against Organized Crime and the Financing of Terrorism of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex XI and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to Ms. Anna Ekstedt, Ambassador-at-Large for Combating Trafficking in Persons of Sweden.

**Ms. Ekstedt** (Sweden): Trafficking in persons is a despicable and serious crime that violates the rights of its many victims. Women and children are particularly exposed to it. We all need to do our utmost to prevent and end this crime. In many of our countries, serious

and organized crime is increasingly dynamic, complex and highly adaptive to new conditions.

Sweden is no exception to that. The complicity of criminal networks has been very evident during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We also see it when new crises appear worldwide, given that traffickers often abuse those situations to profit from the vulnerability of people in extreme need. Another example of the adaptability of the criminal networks is their misuse of technology, to which children are particularly exposed. But let us not forget that technology and the Internet can also be perfect tools for law enforcement to prevent and combat crime.

To provide the best conditions for law enforcement bodies, the relevant international framework, as well as national legislation, must be developed. International cooperation and cooperation with Internet service providers are also crucial. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons have key roles to play in that work. To end trafficking, we need to address the core root cause, namely, the demand. Trafficking exists due to the fact that people are paying for it.

Sweden applies a gendered approach to trafficking. It is addressed and included in our work to combat men's violence against women, which is an integral part of the Swedish feminist foreign policy. Sweden was the first country in the world to criminalize the purchase — but not the sale — of sexual services. The ban entered into force in 1999 and has been an important tool to counteract trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It has made Sweden a less attractive market for traffickers and has further strengthened the status of victims. It has also had a normative effect.

Article 9, paragraph 5, of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children reminds us that we all have an obligation to address the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking. Sweden urges all Member States to fully implement the Protocol.

Sweden is equally committed to supporting victims of trafficking, and the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons is an excellent mechanism to do so, as it ensures invaluable assistance to victims. I am therefore happy to announce that Sweden will continue our generous support for the

Trust Fund in the form of an additional contribution of \$565,000. We strongly recommend that other Member States do the same, as assistance to victims in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial.

We cannot accept the serious abuse that victims of trafficking are facing and that people are indifferent to their situation. We need to disrupt that business model of exploitation and find efficient mechanisms and cooperation models to do so. The appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons shows that a lot has been done, but we have yet to achieve success in targeting this crime.

Addressing the demand and the online dimension need to be at the heart of attention in our future joint efforts in order to efficiently combat and end this crime. We also need to include survivors in the efforts ahead. Sweden reaffirms its commitment to that important work and welcomes the adoption of the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 76/7).

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Romania to introduce a statement by the State Councillor in the Office of the Prime Minister of Romania.

**Ms. Niculae** (Romania): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of Ms. Maria Mădălina Turza, State Councillor in the Office of the Prime Minister of Romania.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex XII and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan to introduce a statement by the Chief of the Main Department of the Fight against Human Trafficking of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan.

**Ms. Ahangari** (Azerbaijan): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of Mr. Samir Garayev, Chief of the Main Department of the Fight against Human Trafficking of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex XIII and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to introduce a statement by the Head of Investigation of the Department of Anti-Trafficking in Persons of the Ministry of the Interior of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Al Khalil** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of Mr. Kaif Al-Naddaf, Head of Investigation of the Department of Anti-Trafficking in Persons of the Ministry of the Interior of the Syrian Arab Republic.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see annex XIV and A/76/569/Add.1).*

**Mr. Takht Ravanchi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the President and the Secretariat for organizing this high-level meeting. Our deliberations here are instrumental in addressing the challenges of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and finding ways to overcome them.

Trafficking in persons is undeniably one of the most notorious crimes. To form a collective response to that menace, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols have attempted to create a coherent cross-border regulatory environment. As one of the earliest signatories to the Convention, the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken the necessary steps to combat human trafficking in line with its provisions and Protocols. In that regard, the Convention was approved by our Parliament in 2018 and is now under consideration by the Expediency Council for its final approval.

At the national level, we have in place within our legal system several statutory regulations on trafficking in persons, as well as other legal tools necessary for its investigation and prosecution. To complement those efforts, the Government has also approved a new draft bill amending our 2004 law on combating human trafficking and submitted it to Parliament for adoption.

The draft bill focuses on defining trafficking in persons as a notorious crime and determining its essential elements; it also takes into account the aggravating circumstances applicable to that crime, such as when it is perpetrated against minors and women. Needless to say, such harmonization will eventually contribute to international cooperation on the issue.

The Ministry of the Interior established the Commission on Countering Trafficking in Persons, which enjoys a set of executive and supervisory functions and, inter alia, works to develop policies, strategies and programmes and monitor any activities related to trafficking in persons. On the front lines, our law enforcement personnel continue to bravely counter those groups, despite the lack of necessary means and resources available as a result of the unlawful United States sanctions and in the absence of much-needed international support to combat organized criminal groups efficiently.

The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its commitment to combating trafficking in persons and considers the role of United Nations bodies, especially the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as essential in determining and facilitating international cooperation in that regard. We call on the international community to provide tailor-made, accessible and effective technical assistance to countries in order to combat this crime in a more efficient manner.

**Ms. Fatima** (Bangladesh): I thank the President for convening today's high-level meeting. We welcome yesterday's adoption of the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 76/7).

Human trafficking is a global menace and an affront to the fundamental principles of human rights and human dignity. To prevent and suppress this heinous crime, we need robust legislative frameworks, multi-stakeholder partnerships and effective international cooperation.

In Bangladesh, we have adopted comprehensive legislative, policy and institutional capacity-building measures to address human trafficking that are premised on addressing root causes, supporting victims and prosecuting traffickers. Our national law defines human trafficking in the most comprehensive manner, in line with the Palermo Protocol. We recognize the close nexus between human trafficking and human smuggling, including for labour trafficking.

Separate anti-trafficking tribunals are being established in divisional cities to prosecute and punish traffickers. The adoption of successive national action plans on trafficking in persons has improved our response to it. In recognizing socioeconomic factors as a root cause, our action plans are aligned with our



Sustainable Development Goals implementation plan and our national development plans.

Our anti-trafficking efforts are multi-stakeholder and localized. We have established counter-trafficking committees at the local level, with the representation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations and relevant Government agencies, as well as community-based organizations. Our victim-centred approach is strengthened and complemented by the participation of NGOs and other civil society actors.

We are party to all major United Nations conventions, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocol. We also work in collaboration with countries and organizations of the region to address trafficking, including through bilateral agreements, to ensure the smooth rescue, recovery and reintegration of victims of trafficking. Allow me to share a few challenges that require stronger international cooperation and support.

First, we must address the root causes of trafficking, which are driven by multiple factors, including climate vulnerability, conflict and displacement. For example, the vulnerability of the Rohingya minority in our neighbouring Myanmar has been a major cause of trafficking in our region. We are currently hosting more than 1 million Rohingya, who are increasingly being pushed into desperate situations as there has been no progress on their return to Myanmar. A large majority of the trafficking victims in our region are believed to be displaced Rohingya.

Secondly, we need to strengthen international and regional cooperation in the area of labour migration, which if not properly addressed can potentially turn into a labour-trafficking situation. Close collaboration at the bilateral and regional levels would help to check unscrupulous agents who exploit helpless jobseekers. It is equally important to strengthen cooperation with regard to the investigation, prosecution and punishment of such traffickers.

Thirdly, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has increased vulnerabilities, especially for those working in the informal sector. Returnee migrant workers remain at risk of exploitation. They need decent livelihood opportunities and to be included in the COVID-19 recovery plans so that they do not fall prey to traffickers.

Fourthly, the implementation of global commitments, including the Global Plan of Action, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is crucial for eliminating the scourge of trafficking. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Organization for Migration and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, as well as other entities, including regional and local organizations, need to be adequately resourced to support anti-trafficking efforts at national levels. For our part, we remain committed to collaborating, partnering and cooperating with all relevant actors to combat trafficking in all its forms resolutely and effectively.

**Mr. Tun** (Myanmar): Myanmar welcomes the progress made and supports the process under way for the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We also wish to reaffirm our commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes commitments related to combating all forms of trafficking in persons. Myanmar welcomes the adoption of the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 76/7) and commends its co-facilitators for their hard work.

Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime that violates human dignity. Although there has been significant progress made in combating it, we still have much further to go. The 2020 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Global Report on Trafficking in Persons clearly illustrates the precarious conditions that are faced in particular by women, girls and children, who are disproportionately affected by trafficking in persons.

In Myanmar, the democratically elected Government made concerted efforts to strengthen the rule of law, promote justice and human rights and foster economic development, all of which are foundations for addressing vulnerabilities to trafficking in persons. Significant progress had been made, but because of the illegal military coup on 1 February, all of the developments that followed have been in vain.

Since then, the military and security forces have committed widespread and systematic atrocities against the civilian populations across the country. They have murdered almost 1,300 people, including

at least 90 children. More than 10,380 people have been arbitrarily arrested. More than 200,000 people have been internally displaced, many of whom are highly vulnerable to human trafficking in the country and elsewhere in the region as a result of their forced displacement. Currently, 3 million people are in need of humanitarian aid.

The deteriorating economic situation, humanitarian emergencies, the destruction of the rule of law, people's lack of trust in law enforcement, the total disregard for human life and the ongoing atrocities perpetrated by the illegal military junta in Myanmar add up to a perfect storm that human traffickers will take advantage of. Our women, girls and children in internally displaced persons camps and our migrant workers are now more vulnerable to trafficking in persons than ever before.

In conclusion, addressing the crisis in Myanmar requires a collective and holistic approach. In order to bring peace, stability and development back to Myanmar, it is imperative to first end the illegal military junta, ensure accountability for atrocity crimes and re-establish the rule of law and the federal democratic system of governance enshrined in the Constitution that was chosen by the people of Myanmar. In that regard, I appeal to the international community to extend their helping hands to the people of Myanmar.

**Mr. Vorshilov** (Mongolia): At the outset, it is my great honour and privilege to participate in the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. I wish to commend the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its tremendous work on its *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* and to extend my sincere congratulations to the co-facilitators of the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 76/7) for their tireless efforts towards achieving consensus. Indeed, the reaching of consensus shows that the international community stands together to combat exploitation of any kind.

We have made significant progress on recognizing and addressing the challenges posed by trafficking and improving international frameworks; however, the data in the *Global Report* as well as the perpetrators' diversification of methods and the criminals' misuse of information and telecommunication technologies have led us to a point where we must collaborate even closer.

Cases of trafficking in persons should never fade away with impunity.

Socioeconomic disparities and vulnerabilities remain the principal predisposing factors for people of any race to become victims of trafficking. The *Global Report* indicates that women and children are still the primary targets of traffickers; its most distressing finding is that more children than adults are the victims of sexual exploitation. Global inequalities, the downscaling of economies, unemployment and many other obstacles have increased since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease pandemic. As we collectively endure this difficult time, millions of people are at greater risk of becoming victims of human trafficking.

The Government of Mongolia has taken every measure to faithfully implement its obligations under the international agreements to combat trafficking in persons. Since our accession, in 2008, to the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the Government of Mongolia has made several improvements to its legislation with a view to preventing and combating trafficking in persons effectively. One such example was the establishment, in 2017, of a national anti-trafficking programme, which will continue until the end of the year. It aims to provide technical guidance on trafficking prevention and coordinating inter-agency efforts to implement relevant legislation.

Conscious of the fact that Mongolia could become a transit country for traffickers, in October the Government of Mongolia and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism signed a memorandum of understanding for a partnership under the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme. That flagship programme will significantly improve Mongolia's capacities to prevent, detect and counter the travel of terrorists, serious criminals and members of international criminal groups, including traffickers.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance of collectively addressing newly emerging threats in the field of information and technology. We have all fallen far behind on the rapid developments in that regard, which is enabling criminals and transnational criminal groups to anonymously misuse technology to plan, communicate and execute their criminal acts. I call for stronger international

collaboration, information-sharing and capacity-building assistance to address those threats effectively.

**Mr. Gertze** (Namibia): I wish to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Ambassadors José Alfonso Blanco Conde of the Dominican Republic and Enrique Austria Manalo of the Philippines, as well as their teams, for facilitating the negotiations on the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 76/7), adopted by the General Assembly yesterday.

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers in their own countries and abroad. It is a scourge that affects every country in the world, whether as a country of origin, a country of transit or a country of destination for victims. It is a hidden crime whose perpetrators operate in the dark, preying on victims who are marginalized or in difficult circumstances.

Undocumented migrants and people who are in desperate need of employment are also vulnerable, particularly to trafficking for forced labour, while trafficking in persons affects female victims the most. There are many different ways that people can fall prey to trafficking, which ultimately results in a form of modern-day slavery that can include sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, debt bondage or many other unspeakable and horrible sufferings.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, deepening fault lines and driving some segments of society further into poverty, which has resulted in many people becoming more vulnerable to trafficking. Crime thrives in crisis. In that regard, traffickers have taken advantage of the current situation, capitalizing on the chaos created by the pandemic to recruit victims in even more ways than before. The increase in the use of the Internet and digital spaces has also resulted in the increased incidence of online sexual exploitation. Traffickers are now integrating that into their business models and amplifying their impact by operating online in multiple locations.

We cannot permit the pandemic recession to reverse the progress collectively made in our efforts to combat trafficking in persons by putting more women, men and children in danger of being trafficked. Even as the COVID-19 pandemic puts resources under pressure,

law enforcement and social protection responses must continue to be vigilant in addressing trafficking risks.

In many ways, trafficking in persons is a pandemic of its own, and in order to respond to it we need to better understand the factors that facilitate human trafficking. It is also important that we work together to develop solutions that are capable of addressing root causes and risk factors, prosecuting offenders, protecting the vulnerable and better supporting victims. We must also ensure that victims are not punished for acts they commit as a result of trafficking.

Trafficking in persons is a multifaceted crime that calls for a multisectoral response. In Namibia, we have met that challenge by establishing a multi-agency technical committee on trafficking in persons, under the aegis of which our Government has incorporated an approach focused on 3Ps — prevention, prosecution and protection — in all its programmes to combat trafficking in persons. In other words, our response establishes effective measures to prevent the crime, prosecute the perpetrators and protect and support the victims.

Over the past few years, among other things, Namibia has operationalized its 2018 Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act; established a national coordination mechanism for the implementation of anti-trafficking in persons initiatives; developed a national referral mechanism and standard operational procedures with the main purpose of identifying and protecting victims of trafficking; significantly increased the number of perpetrators it has prosecuted, convicted and sentenced; and increased the training of front-line responders to prevent trafficking.

On 30 July, we commemorated the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, on the theme “Victims lead the way”, which places the victims of human trafficking at the centre of our prevention efforts. Learning from victims’ experiences and turning their suggestions into concrete actions will lead to a more victim-centred and effective approach to combating human trafficking. Our actions should therefore be guided by their experiences; we should shine a spotlight on victims, as well as their experiences and stories. We must recognize the key role that victims play in combating trafficking in persons. We must also safeguard and ensure their access to justice.

When we enshrined the Sustainable Development Goals six years ago, we committed ourselves to reducing

inequalities and pledged to leave no one behind. It is our duty as Member States not only to tackle this heinous crime but also to shed light on trafficking patterns and flows and at the same time to highlight victims and survivors and their stories of resilience and perseverance. If we fail to do that, we will continue to lag behind in meeting our objective to ensure peaceful and inclusive societies in which no one is left behind.

**Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan):** First of all, I would like to commend the President for convening this high-level meeting on combating trafficking in persons, which remains one of the most dangerous types of transnational organized crime and continues to pose serious challenges for the international community.

Uzbekistan has been taking coherent measures towards the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons since it was adopted by the General Assembly. Our main focus has been to take action to prevent trafficking in persons, protect its victims, prosecute its perpetrators and strengthen partnerships with specialized United Nations agencies. Particular attention is paid to identifying and protecting victims of trafficking and assisting them in their reintegration into society. Uzbekistan has taken the following steps.

First, we established a state-of-the-art reintegration centre in Tashkent that provides victims of trafficking with protection and psychological, legal, social, medical and other assistance.

Secondly, the Chairperson of our Senate — the upper house of Uzbekistan's national Parliament — created and leads the National Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Forced Labour. The main purpose of the Commission is to coordinate the efforts of national and regional authorities, self-governing bodies and non-governmental and non-profit organizations in the area of combating trafficking in persons and the use of forced labour in order to ensure their effectiveness, synergy and coherence.

Thirdly, at the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the office of the national rapporteur on trafficking in persons and forced labour was established. The rapporteur is responsible for ensuring effective cooperation and collaboration with the international community, international organizations and human rights defenders who specialize in combating trafficking in persons.

Fourthly, the Government has conducted five humanitarian operations to repatriate Uzbekistan nationals, mostly women and children, from conflict zones in the Middle East and Afghanistan and has created all the conditions necessary for their reintegration into society.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that in Uzbekistan we have put in place an effective system for combating trafficking in persons that is in full conformity with the Global Plan of Action. My country remains committed to furthering close cooperation with relevant United Nations specialized agencies, Member States and other stakeholders in our efforts to respond to this criminal activity.

**Mr. Szczerski (Poland):** My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/76/PV.37). I would like to offer some additional remarks on behalf of Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and my own country, Poland.

Today's meeting is a perfect and timely opportunity to remind everyone about the efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. The economic and social distress generated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the related mitigation efforts have exasperated the risk of trafficking, in particular for people in vulnerable and marginalized situations, including women, children and persons affected by the disruption of economic activities and reduced livelihood options. Preventing and ending this serious crime depends on international cooperation and comprehensive partnerships uniting action across countries of origin, transit and destination. It requires a human rights-based and victim-centred approach and underscores the urgency for compliance with the obligations under the relevant United Nations legally binding instruments. This response must also address discrimination and marginalization.

Unfortunately, over the past few months we have observed the ever-expanding scale of this disturbing phenomenon affecting vulnerable groups near the border of the European Union. It is even more disturbing that the actions causing it, which amount to human smuggling and trafficking in persons, are perpetrated by a State — orchestrated and performed by the Belarus authorities. That large-scale instrumentalization of migration for political purposes, as well as its hybrid threats, must be condemned by the international community.



We also need to remember the root of the situation at the borders between the European Union and Belarus, and the State-promoted mechanisms supporting human trafficking. Over the past several weeks, we have seen thousands of people being deceptively lured to embark on a trip to a better future. That meant that they obtained visas issued by Belarus authorities to enter Belarus and paid exorbitant sums to fly to Minsk, from where they were guided to approach Belarus' border with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia to attempt unauthorized border crossings into European Union territory.

In October alone, the Polish authorities registered more than 17,000 attempts at such illegal crossings from Belarus. We appreciate the efforts of the European Union to work with the countries of origin to stop flights to Belarus and start repatriation and commend the international organizations with offices in Minsk that are involved in resolving the critical humanitarian situation at the Belarus-Poland border. We strongly call on Belarus to comply with international law, including the Palermo Protocols against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air and to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and their fundamental human rights obligations in order to protect the dignity and safety of the victims of human trafficking and stop using innocent people for its cynical political games.

**Mr. Alrowaiei** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for having convened this high-level meeting of the General Assembly to assess the progress that has been achieved in implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We reiterate our commitment to the Global Plan of Action and reaffirm the common desire to end that crime, which remains a challenge for humankind.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, attaches great importance to the issue of combating trafficking in persons. The Government headed by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, has been strengthening efforts in this humanitarian field by applying international standards and adopting the relevant laws and legislations, the most important of which is Law No. 1 of 2008 on combating trafficking in persons, which established a national electronic referral system.

In addition to our active contributions to regional and international efforts to combat this crime, we also established the Expat Protection Centre, which provides support and guiding services for migrant workers, in addition to establishing a fund to support victims of trafficking with a view to rehabilitate them and improve their living and financial situations.

As a result of those efforts, the Kingdom of Bahrain maintained its position as a Tier 1 country for the fourth consecutive year in the United States Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report 2021*. We also adopted many pioneering initiatives and national effective projects through the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons and the Labour Market Regulatory Authority, as well as close cooperation among all ministries and parties concerned with combating trafficking in persons and protecting the victims.

As part of its efforts to raise awareness about combating trafficking in persons, the Kingdom of Bahrain has established the Regional Center of Excellence for Capacity Building in the Field of Combatting Trafficking in Persons, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the Gulf Cooperation Council States and the International Organization for Migration. Moreover, the Kingdom of Bahrain has established a new prosecutor's office for cases of trafficking in persons, which is an important step in ensuring the protection of victims of human trafficking and safeguarding their rights. We are the first Arab country to establish such a prosecutor's office.

Finally, the Kingdom of Bahrain stresses that it will continue its cooperation with the international community in all efforts aimed at combating trafficking in persons, preventing that cross-border crime and protecting its victims.

**Mr. Chatrnuch** (Slovakia): First, let me take this opportunity to warmly thank the President for organizing this high-level meeting on such an important issue. I would also like to thank the briefers for their insightful remarks, which serve as significant reminders that trafficking in human beings is one of the biggest evils and is still an issue of daily reality.

There is no doubt that human trafficking is a gross human rights violation and is totally unacceptable. It is an extremely serious form of human rights abuse that particularly affects women and girls, who are victims of sexual exploitation, including forced prostitution,

forced marriage and sexual slavery. To ensure that no victim is left behind, the adoption of a gender-sensitive approach in combating trafficking is more than crucial.

An important question we must ask is, what should we as the international community do in order to relegate human trafficking to history, where it belongs? Since it is not the problem of a single country, but a global one, we must join our forces and take effective actions.

Let us make the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which we adopted yesterday (resolution 76/7), a decisive step forward towards achieving this common goal. In that regard, let us also be reminded that all our actions must be based on a coordinated approach to narrowing the scope of possibility for committing the crime of trafficking in human beings, taking into account new trends and developments in the area in question and identifying the perpetrators and potential victims. In order to achieve that objective, we must pay due attention to the four Ps — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. But our endeavour will be in vain if we do not tackle root causes such as discrimination and social exclusion at the same time.

Whereas trafficking in human beings is a dynamically evolving crime, we must accordingly adapt the communication regarding this situation between aid providers as well as between law enforcement authorities, not only at the national level but also at the international level. Since combating trafficking in human beings is one of Slovakia's priorities in countering organized crime, we seize this opportunity to express our readiness to cooperate with international partners in that regard.

Taking into account the seriousness of the situation on the Belarus-Poland border, it is highly deplorable that one State is currently instrumentalizing migration on a large scale for political purposes — a practice that also amounts to trafficking in human beings. It demonstrates the cynicism of Mr. Lukashenko's regime, which places people's dignity, lives and health in danger in order to distract from human rights violations and brutal repression in the country. We condemn in the strongest terms this inhumane and intolerable behaviour and urge Belarus to stop this practice without further delay.

**Mr. Khan (Pakistan):** My delegation welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting of the General Assembly. It is a timely opportunity to assess the

progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, as well as to identify obstacles and find appropriate solutions.

Human trafficking affects all regions of the world. The criminals involved in it prey on the weakest and the most vulnerable. In recent years, proliferating conflicts, insecurity and economic deprivation have combined to compel millions of men, women and children to leave their homes to seek physical safety and economic security in other lands. Often, they are at the mercy of organized criminal groups and networks. In the process of illegal migration, thousands of people have died at sea, in the desert and in detention centres.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has indeed exacerbated global poverty and inequalities. Millions of people are at greater risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour or to be victimized by other crimes. Pakistan continues to combat all kinds of organized crime, including human trafficking and migrant smuggling. In partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other international partners, our law enforcement authorities have made significant progress in addressing this challenge. We have developed a strategic national action plan for the period from 2021 to 2025 to combat trafficking in persons; formulated detailed rules and migrant smuggling laws for the prevention of trafficking; adopted standard operating procedures for victim support and referral mechanisms; and strengthened the technical capacities of immigration and border management officials to prevent irregular migration and curb trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.

The United Nations adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration marked the beginning of a new era of migration governance, dialogue and international cooperation. It reflected a growing global understanding of the multiple benefits of human mobility. At the same time, it also recognized that, if poorly managed, migration can generate huge challenges, from human rights abuses and social tensions to the tragic loss of lives. Despite the current challenges, the international community can draw on the Global Compact with greater inclusion and sustainability. At the same time, opening up additional avenues for legal migration is one way to reduce the demand for human smuggling and trafficking services and meet the migration-related Sustainable Development Goals.

To end human trafficking in all its forms, we must take a unified coordinated, consistent and equitable global approach. The Global Plan of Action can achieve that objective. Pakistan will continue to promote its balanced and effective implementation.

**Mr. Alateek** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): First and foremost, my country's delegation would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting on progress in the implementation of the United Nations Global Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to Ambassador José Alfonso Blanco Conde, Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic, and Ambassador Enrique Austria Manalo, Permanent Representative of the Philippines, for facilitating lengthy discussions in a transparent and balanced manner and taking into account most of the positions of the various delegations that participated in drafting the political declaration since August.

The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights by establishing systems and guidelines to guarantee the preservation of human dignity and protect human rights and individual freedoms, as per the provisions of Islamic Sharia law, which are based on the principles of justice, freedom and equality. That is done by implementing regulations and establishing national measures and procedures to combat and end these crimes. As a result of our ongoing tangible accomplishments, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has achieved a high ranking at the international level in this area.

The system of combating crimes related to trafficking in persons, established by a 2009 royal decree, is one of the most important systems in the Kingdom to combat these crimes. The system establishes penalties for those who perpetrate any of these crimes and establishes victims' rights and provides for their care during investigations and trials of perpetrators, in line with the Islamic Sharia law and according to relevant international standards which we acknowledge.

In order to ensure coordination and complementarity of national efforts, our Council of Ministers adopted a decision that established a committee within the Saudi Human Rights Commission to combat crimes related to trafficking in persons. It includes representatives

of governmental parties entrusted with combating such crimes.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia attaches importance to having in place a national methodology that organizes the efforts made by relevant parties to combat human trafficking with the aim of ensuring the complementarity and coordination of roles and defining the essential role of civil-society institutions in raising awareness about those crimes. In that connection, we have been cooperating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a national plan to combat trafficking in persons in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which would be a road map to guide national efforts involving prevention and combating crimes related to trafficking in persons, and a general framework for the performance of the participating parties.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that combating trafficking in persons is always a top priority for my country, which attaches great importance to it at both national and international levels. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes all aspects of cooperation and coordination with all members of the international community with a view to combating this crime while ensuring and preserving the dignity and freedom of all human beings on Earth.

**Mr. Aidid** (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish to thank the President for convening this high-level meeting to appraise the progress achieved in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We welcome the adoption of the Political Declaration (resolution 76/7) and hope that the international community will show greater resolve to address existing gaps and challenges in our common efforts to fight this menace.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has further impeded efforts by countries to address trafficking in persons. The vulnerable populations exposed to the socioeconomic crises and health impacts of COVID-19 have become more susceptible to exploitation. Survivors of human trafficking are also at risk of re-trafficking and re-exploitation. The pandemic has also impacted the capacity of authorities to tackle crimes related to trafficking and to work with non-governmental organizations in providing essential services to the victims.

Malaysia recognizes that trafficking in persons impinges not only on fundamental human rights but

also on the sovereignty and security of countries. We strongly condemn trafficking in persons and remain fully committed in our efforts to combat it. Those efforts include enhancing the capacity of law enforcement, as well as inter-agency and international cooperation; smart partnerships with Government agencies, civil-society organizations, international organizations and foreign Government agencies; enhancing assistance to victims of trafficking in persons based on a human rights- and victim-centred approach; and raising awareness on issues related to trafficking in persons and Government efforts to combat this crime through an effective media campaign. At the national level, Malaysia is guided by the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007 and the national action plan on anti-trafficking in persons 2025, launched in March.

Malaysia wishes to reiterate that the international community needs to exert more efforts and continue to urge countries of origin to carry out greater measures to prevent their citizens from being exploited by human traffickers. Comprehensive strategies developed through holistic approaches, as well as international and regional cooperation, are needed to combat human trafficking. Malaysia will continue to fulfil its responsibilities in combating trafficking in persons, while at the same time ensuring that its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity are not compromised.

**Mr. Espinosa Cañizares** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to express our deep gratitude to the President for convening this high-level meeting.

We the Member States today have an opportunity to assess achievements, reflect on existing challenges and chart the path forward for combating trafficking in persons, in accordance with the modalities for the United Nations Global Plan of Action Combat Trafficking in Persons set out in resolution 75/283. We welcome the adoption of the Political Declaration (resolution 76/7) as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitments and demonstrate our firm will to take concrete action to end to this grave offense to human dignity, which represents a violation and abuse of human rights and a challenge to sustainable development.

My country's Government has adopted a stance of non-violence based on the principle of community interdependence, where the well-being of one is

considered a vital part of the well-being of all. Reducing social gaps is a high-priority challenge for the Government of Ecuador. In that regard, we are undertaking two major initiatives: the first is to protect women from violence by establishing comprehensive and permanent care centres for survivors of violence; and the second is to foster women's economic empowerment as one of the main tools to break cycles of violence and ensure the economic and financial capacity of women and their children. Those initiatives are part of our ongoing combat against human trafficking, which has been integrated into several of our legal frameworks.

Our Constitution, as well as our penal code, the Organic Law on Human Mobility and the Comprehensive General Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women, in conjunction with several of our public policies such as our citizen security and peaceful social cohesion plan and our national action plan against trafficking in persons for the period from 2019 to 2030, promote the implementation of concrete and operational anti-trafficking measures while also taking into account the efforts that different institutions have invested in prevention, protection, prosecution and governance to combat the structural causes of this crime.

Ecuador is taking comprehensive efforts to collect information and statistical data on trafficking in persons and has launched important awareness-raising campaigns for our population in that regard. In line with the principle that victims of trafficking should not be punished, we offer different services to victims including medical, psychological and psychiatric care, legal advice, education, labour reintegration and the regularization of the immigration status of foreign nationals. We have a national witness protection system to protect victims and their families. Financial compensation or other mechanisms for redress are also made available to them. Our Human Rights Secretariat has established special centres for women victims of trafficking. We also have a committee to combat trafficking in persons in the form of a national coordinating agency led by the Ministry of Government, which also coordinates internationally with our ally countries and multilateral agencies to meet this challenging task.

In conclusion, Ecuador reaffirms its commitment to addressing the social, economic, cultural and political factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking, including poverty, irregular migration, gender-based



violence and all forms of discrimination. Trafficking in persons is a crime against humanity that reduces its victims to objects and prevents them from enjoying their rights. We therefore call for effective partnerships to improve cooperation and the use of technologies to combat this scourge.

**Mr. Kimura (Japan):** On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to welcome the convening of this high-level meeting.

Trafficking in persons is a grave violation of human rights and a serious cross-border crime. The social and economic impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic affects the lives of the most vulnerable people and could cause an increase in trafficking. Against that backdrop and from a human-security perspective, Member States should redouble their efforts to eliminate this crime.

It is our priority to combat trafficking in persons. Our Government takes comprehensive measures based on Japan's 2014 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. As required by the Plan, the Government follows up on its implementation by issuing an annual report on measures taken and thereby raises awareness on that issue among citizens. Close coordination among relevant agencies to crack down on this heinous crime, together with efforts to identify and protect victims, enable us to address all types of trafficking, including in women and children for sexual exploitation.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children play a central role in the fight against trafficking in persons. Japan became party to those instruments in 2017 and has implemented them fully and effectively since then. Our Government welcomes the establishment of a mechanism for the review of their implementation and will be proactively engaged in the first review phase to which Japan is subject.

In addition to our efforts at the national level, building strong global partnerships is of utmost interest to us. In that regard, Japan has held the Japan-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Strategic Policy Dialogue annually since 2013. Japan has also been providing technical assistance to various anti-trafficking projects developed by UNODC and other organizations. For example, Japanese experts, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, are engaged in victim support and

rehabilitation measures that have enabled more than 300 victims to return home safely. We also welcome that the Japan-Association of Southeast Asian Nations Integration Fund has been utilized to implement projects to confront this crime.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance of taking concerted action in, close cooperation with other Member States, relevant United Nations organizations and civil society, in our efforts to end this crime.

**Mr. Agyeman (Ghana):** At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important high-level meeting aimed at appraising progress in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Ghana expresses its solidarity with the victims and survivors of the dehumanizing act of trafficking in persons, and reiterates the importance of the implementation of the applicable human rights conventions, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

However, my delegation remains concerned about the continued rise of this menace, especially among women, children and young people and, in the context of West Africa, the growing link between armed groups, including terrorist groups, and trafficking in persons. The use of online platforms to facilitate various aspects of trafficking in persons, including advertising, grooming and recruitment, as well as various forms of exploitation, such as online child sexual exploitation, are also of great concern.

The contributing factors to the menace of trafficking in persons, notably the dire socioeconomic conditions in several developing countries, including the situation of unemployment, endemic poverty, gender inequality and corruption, have been exacerbated by the harsh onset of the coronavirus disease pandemic. Ghana therefore welcomes the timely adoption of the forward-looking Political Declaration on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action (resolution 76/7), which, we believe, will help to re-ignite global solidarity in combating this menace as a matter of urgency.

At the national level, the Government of Ghana has demonstrated commitment in tackling the issue of

trafficking in persons by enacting legislation to prevent and suppress trafficking, punish persons complicit in human trafficking and initiate interventions to promote the protection and welfare of victims. One key piece of legislation is our Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694), and a notable policy measure taken in that regard was our establishment of anti-human trafficking units within law enforcement agencies, including in the Ghana Police Service and the Ghana Immigration Service.

Before I conclude, I wish to highlight the following points.

First, the provision of technical assistance to developing countries continues to be critical to their capacity development. In that regard, I wish to express our appreciation to stakeholders, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Organization for Migration and the International Labour Organization, for their role in this area and urge increased support in that regard.

Secondly, while we welcome investment in areas like border management and intelligence-sharing to help in early detection and the disruption of perpetrators of this heinous crime, it is our view that those are only rudimentary tools for combating this menace. Additional support is therefore required.

Thirdly, there is the need to channel more investment into addressing the root causes of this canker, particularly governance and development deficits, while prioritizing the voices of women, young people and victims and survivors of this menace in the decision-making processes.

Fourthly, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a decline in fiscal revenues across many developing countries. We therefore urge renewed responses to address these peculiar financial challenges, including through debt cancellation and the restructuring of debt repayment, to enable those countries to respond to their socioeconomic challenges and build back better in a manner that reduces the likelihood of potential victims falling prey to the traps of traffickers.

Fifthly, we call for more funding support for the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons and for stronger support for regional and subregional arrangements, such as the African Union Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children and the

Economic Community of West African States Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons. Ghana believes that the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the new Political Declaration on its implementation provide solid foundations for dealing with the issue. The political will of Member States to ratify and translate these bold commitments into national policies and to implement them is the key to sustaining the efforts to address this menace.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting on the crime of human trafficking, which is the most common form of transnational organized crime and requires concerted national and international efforts to address it.

We are of the view that the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons is an important tool for unifying global efforts in that regard. Given the grave situation, the United Arab Emirates attaches great importance to preventing and combating this crime. To that end, in 2007 it established the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, which aims to implement several procedures and programmes in this regard.

In the context of today's discussion, I would like to highlight three areas emanating from our national strategy that we believe are necessary to address this issue.

The first area is our focus on protection and prevention as the most effective means for combating trafficking in persons. The United Arab Emirates has launched numerous awareness-raising programmes and campaigns to inform individuals of the dangers of this crime, the means to protect themselves from it and ways to report it. We also provide lectures and distribute publications about trafficking to law enforcement agencies, State employees stationed at our ports of entry, incoming workers and religious institutions. Due to the coronavirus disease pandemic, which has increased criminality related to trafficking in persons around the world, my country has also intensified its efforts in this regard by developing precautionary plans based on a set of measures and procedures to protect the victims.

As my country is eager to build capacities and exchange best practices, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking has launched a specialized professional programme — the first of its kind in our

region — to deal exclusively with the crime of human trafficking and assist specialists at the national and regional levels to acquire the necessary research and investigation skills and to learn state-of-the-art methods for identifying crimes of trafficking in persons.

The second area is providing victims with legal and social protection by adopting a victim-based approach. In this context, the United Arab Emirates is one of the first countries in the region to pass legislation criminalizing human trafficking, namely, Federal Law No. 51 of 2006 and its amendments. The United Arab Emirates is constantly reviewing and updating its laws to serve the interests of the victims in the best possible way. In parallel with those efforts, my country supports victims of human trafficking at all stages, particularly by providing them with comprehensive health care and psychosocial support. My country also has care and shelter centres and institutions for victims, including the Abu Dhabi Shelter and Humanitarian Care Centre, and has established a fund to support those victims.

The third area is strengthening international cooperation. Undoubtedly, human trafficking is one of the most despicable crimes that violate human dignity and one of the most serious global challenges. As we believe that all countries should work together to fulfil their international obligations to combat this crime, the United Arab Emirates has signed a number of memoranda of understanding with friendly countries in the field of cooperation to combat this crime and provide protection to victims. We have also cooperated with labour-exporting countries and established the Abu Dhabi Dialogue initiative, a consultative mechanism for organizing dialogue among the countries sending and receiving workers in Asia.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the commitment and determination of the United Arab Emirates to continue launching initiatives aimed at completely eliminating the crime of trafficking in persons. That includes our commitment to multilateral cooperation and close collaboration with members of the Human Rights Council during our upcoming term, which will begin in January 2022, as well as supporting the efforts of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, of which my country is a member.

**Mr. Hawke** (New Zealand): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important high-level meeting.

New Zealand welcomes the adoption of the Political Declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 76/7). A strong, cooperative, global response is required to adequately address this pervasive problem. New Zealand is committed to eliminating people trafficking in all its forms, both within New Zealand and across international borders. New Zealand condemns all forms of trafficking in persons and calls on all States to exercise their responsibilities and powers to put an end to this violation of human dignity and rights. We strongly support a human rights-based, gender- and age-responsive, survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach to combating trafficking. Such an approach ensures that the welfare of victims is at the heart of our response and that enforcement tools available to hold offenders to account are used effectively.

New Zealand's national plan of action is aimed at addressing forced labour, people trafficking and slavery connected to New Zealand. This plan of action is organized around three internationally recognized pillars: prevention, protection and enforcement and prosecution. These pillars are underpinned by a partnership approach, with effective partnership among Government, business and civil society being critical to its success. Among other measures in the plan of action, New Zealand has also committed to considering domestic legislation to address modern slavery in global supply chains. Modern slavery is a global issue, and it will take a global response to create meaningful change. This legislation would set a standard to help ensure that all people are treated fairly and with dignity. It would also help to ensure that New Zealand businesses and consumers are not inadvertently contributing to the exploitation of other people, including children, around the world.

The remaining discussions regarding the Global Plan of Action, and particularly the contributions and expertise of panellists regarding ongoing issues related to the trafficking of women and children for the purposes of sexual exploitation, will deserve close attention. New Zealand will do its part in preventing and combating trafficking in persons wherever it occurs and will continue to work with partners, including in the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime and the International Labour Organization.

**Mr. Rai** (Nepal): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing

this important high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Nepal welcomes the adoption of the 2021 Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 76/7, annex), and fully commits to its effective implementation.

Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, not only constitutes a serious threat to human dignity, human rights and development, but it also questions the very moral foundation of human civilization itself. The coronavirus disease pandemic has exacerbated existing situations of vulnerability to trafficking in persons. Owing to that, human trafficking, as well as sexual and gender-based violence, has significantly increased during this period. We must strive to address the social, economic, cultural and political problems that make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons, such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, gender discrimination, exclusion and marginalization.

Nepal is committed to implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons effectively. We enacted the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act to control acts of human trafficking and transportation and to protect and rehabilitate the victims of such acts. The National Plan of Action against Human Trafficking (2011-2021) is under implementation.

In 2020, Nepal acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The national penal code prohibits hostage taking and kidnapping for trafficking and enslavement and criminalizes forced labour, sexual exploitation and torture. Victims of human trafficking are entitled to receive compensation, rehabilitation, economic support and psychosocial counselling.

As one of the pathfinder countries of the global partnership Alliance 8.7, Nepal is implementing its second National Master Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour (2018-2028) to end the worst form of child labour by 2022 and abolish all forms of child labour by 2025.

The safety, security and well-being of migrant workers and protecting them from being trafficked have always remained a high priority for Nepal. We call

for the effective implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to help prevent the trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

Nepal is committed to assuming its role in combat trafficking in persons with comprehensive and coordinated policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels.

**Mr. Al Hassan (Oman)** (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to welcome the convening of this high-level meeting on the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is increasingly of interest to the international community in the light of calls to intensify cooperation in order to eliminate that phenomenon.

My country, the Sultanate of Oman, has paid particular attention to countering the phenomenon of trafficking in persons, which is counter to our principles and human values. My country has established a national committee to combat trafficking in persons. Since its inception in 2008, the committee has implemented a number of programmes and workshops and held seminars and conferences in order to raise awareness of the phenomenon and its risks, as well as to propose legislation to combat and eradicate it, despite the challenges that the world has recently been facing, in particular the coronavirus disease pandemic and its consequences. All those challenges have not deterred our Government from pursuing its efforts to eradicate the phenomenon.

In that context, I would like to mention the national plan of action to combat human trafficking for the period 2021-2023. The plan encompasses a number of areas and pillars, the most significant of which is the training of front-line workers, as well as greater awareness-raising at the community level. We have successfully implemented initiatives such as the Insan initiative, which was launched by the Government in cooperation with the private sector and civil society. The initiative has resulted in greater awareness within a wide sector of workers and employers about this phenomenon and its risks, as well as means of reporting to safeguard society and human rights.

Apart from the efforts made at the national level, my country's Government has also joined a number of international and regional treaties and conventions on combating trafficking in persons, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; its additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress



and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention; and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We also joined the Arab Initiative to Build National Capacities to Combat Human Trafficking, as well as the Arab Protocol for Prevention and Combating Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery.

In conclusion, our message from the Sultanate of Oman to this high-level meeting is that, as we renew our commitment to the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, we wish to reiterate our determination to eliminate the phenomenon by utilizing all legal ways and means at our disposal in order to achieve a society free from trafficking in persons.

**Mr. Šimonović** (Croatia): Trafficking in persons is a modern form of slavery, a flagrant violation of human rights and a serious crime. It is also a symptom of our lack of coordination and solidarity in governing a globally interconnected world.

To stop trafficking in persons we must improve our cooperation nationally and internationally. All of us — countries of origin, transit and destination; security and law enforcement agencies, social services, private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — have to act together. Instead of ignoring evidence or shifting the blame to each other, we should exchange information and accept our joint responsibility, identify prevention gaps and improve our performance. That is what the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 64/293) and its review are all about.

Let us use this high-level meeting to identify new threats and exchange experiences to identify best responses. We strongly believe that the fight against trafficking requires a human rights-based and victim-centred approach. Vulnerability remains a core factor enabling human trafficking. Implementing Sustainable Development Goal targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2 is therefore crucial for its prevention.

The coronavirus disease pandemic increased people's vulnerabilities, leaving them more susceptible to fraud and fake promises, often used as a cover for trafficking. In addition, traffickers are using new methods to recruit their victims via social media and online platforms, particularly targeting children and

young adults. The overall prosecution and conviction rates remain low, turning human trafficking in into a low-risk and highly profitable crime. To change that equation, we must strengthen our accountability efforts, including through improved anti-money-laundering measures.

We particularly regret serious allegations of State involvement in the recruitment and transfer of migrants to and over its borders, abusing migrants' position of vulnerability and exploiting them to destabilize its neighbours. That alleged practice, if proven, may amount to State-sponsored trafficking and has to stop immediately.

Human trafficking affects Croatia as well. In the past 20 years, 417 victims were identified — most of them women and girls. Croatia is dedicated to combating trafficking in persons. We have ratified all relevant international documents and successfully implement them. We also introduced specific trainings and established NGO-run shelters and an emergency telephone line.

However, to put an end to human trafficking, we all need to do more nationally and internationally. Let us use this high-level meeting for a necessary push in that direction.

**Mrs. González López** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a real honour for me to address the General Assembly at this high-level meeting, in which we will share the experiences of El Salvador in combating human trafficking.

With the ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (resolution 55/25) in 2003, our country began to take important steps to prevent, investigate and punish the crime of trafficking in persons, focusing on restoring the rights of victims and survivors.

In that regard, in 2015 we enacted a special law against trafficking in persons and a National Council against Trafficking in Persons, a body in charge of monitoring, coordinating and evaluating our national policy for the eradication of trafficking in persons. The National Council is also responsible for elaborating plans and actions to prevent and combat this crime and, above all, to ensure comprehensive protection for the victims.

We are aware that human trafficking, alas, did not stop during the coronavirus disease pandemic. However, despite limitations, our national council continued its work on several fronts, including comprehensive care, prosecution of traffickers, training and the detection of potential victims of trafficking by different State entities. Comprehensive care was provided to victims of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. As for prosecution through the Office of the Attorney General, regional investigations of illegal trafficking in persons have been conducted with neighbouring countries Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica. In addition, training has been provided to strengthen technical capacities for differentiated identification and protection mechanisms for victims of trafficking in persons and crimes related to the smuggling of migrants, among other initiatives.

In furtherance of its efforts to strengthen legal tools to effectively combat the crime and facilitate inter-institutional coordination mechanisms for the care and protection of victims of trafficking in persons, El Salvador developed a tool called the Inter-institutional Action Protocol for the Immediate Comprehensive Care of Trafficking Victims, with the objective of applying the coordination and action guidelines for the comprehensive, immediate and prolonged care and protection of victims of trafficking in persons among the different institutions that make up the National Council, according to their competencies.

El Salvador recognizes that we still have many challenges ahead if we are to effectively combat trafficking and attend to the victims and survivors of this global problem in a timely manner. However, as stated in the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (resolution 76/7), adopted in the

framework of this high-level meeting, as States we must commit to intensify our efforts to prevent irregular migration and to strengthen channels for safe, orderly and regular migration and, thus, reduce the exposure of persons on the move to trafficking in persons. In that regard, we recall the commitments made in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, including measures such as access to residence or work permits, humanitarian visas, family reunification, among others.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for its valuable support to our country in combating this scourge. We acknowledge the work of the UNODC Office in El Salvador, which, alongside the Salvadoran Government, is providing technical and logistical assistance to prevent human trafficking.

Human trafficking takes place in every country in the world, whether as a point of origin, transit or destination. We must therefore continue to join efforts to combat this crime and to achieve a more effective implementation of the existing international framework at the national level and greater cooperation at the regional and international levels.

We will continue to pool efforts to effectively investigate, punish and combat this scourge, focusing on the restitution of the rights of victims and survivors.

**The President:** We have heard the last speaker for this meeting.

In that regard, I would also like to thank the interpreters for their assistance today.

We shall hear the remaining speakers this afternoon at 3 p.m. in the General Assembly Hall.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*

## Annex I

### **Statement by H.E. Mr John Jeffery, MP, Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development of the Republic of South Africa**

It is an honour to be part of this event to appraise the progress made in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Trafficking in Persons is a global problem that has plagued many countries. It is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights.

South Africa has not been spared from this.

Whereas most crimes are generally reported to the police, trafficking is not, mainly because victims fear retaliation. Trafficking is a reality in South Africa, with our country being a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficking.

South Africa has also experienced that as poverty increases, vulnerability and desperation increase.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also created new risks and challenges to victims and survivors of trafficking. It has worsened the vulnerabilities of at-risk groups, especially women and children, to trafficking.

Our experience here tells us that Covid-19 has undoubtedly also had an effect on anti-TIP efforts — for example during the hard lockdown, fewer complaints

involving sexual exploitation were reported to the South African Police Services, however more tip-offs were received regarding labour exploitation.

In order to strengthen training initiatives and harness a common understanding of the intent and spirit of our Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act, our Government in partnership with the UNODC, has developed a Generic Integrated Training Manual on the TIP legislation.

South Africa is further in the process of developing an integrated information system to collect data as well as commissioning research on TIP so as to come up with tailored and targeted responses to prevent and combat trafficking in persons.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons has emphasized the need for countries to move towards an approach that is centred on human rights and victims and this is fully supported by South Africa in our anti-TIP efforts.

I would like to share some of the observations that have crystalized over the past year and a half in South Africa:

Firstly, the TIP risk factors changed during Covid-19, due to higher levels of unemployment and loss of income.

Secondly, although the numbers are not large, South Africa is seeing an increasing number of trafficking convictions.

Thirdly, TIP convictions provide significant insights. Victims are seldom kidnapped or taken by force, as traffickers prefer to trick and trap victims by misleading them with false promises of jobs or educational opportunities.

The current trend by traffickers is to recruit their victims over social media. After meeting with the trafficker, the victim would then be kept hostage, drugged, assaulted and/or raped.

In all TIP cases the release of the accused on bail was opposed and bail was denied in the majority of cases. From the data it is evident that females are most likely to be trafficked.

We need to do even more to combat and prevent trafficking in persons. We can only do that with the assistance of bodies such as the UN and international agencies such as the UNODC and others.

And that is why we are here today, to strengthen and support each other, as we fight trafficking in all its forms.

I thank you.



## Annex II

### **Statement by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom**

Hello everyone, and thank you to the President of the General Assembly for this opportunity to discuss the Global Plan for Action.

When new global estimates on modern slavery are published, it will make for difficult reading.

The pandemic has had a devastatingly disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable and those already victim to modern slavery.

More critically than ever we must make immediate and lasting progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 to eradicate this scourge by 2030.

No one nation can do this alone.

In 2017, the UK led the Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

Over 90 countries have endorsed that Call to Action, taking a range of steps, and – crucially — collaborating internationally with others.

The UK continues to look for opportunities to collaborate, with governments, businesses, and survivors. It will take us all to end this menace.

For example, under our Presidency, the leaders of the G7 committed to tackling forced labour global supply chains.

Last month, G7 Trade ministers discussed steps to eradicate forced labour, protect victims and improve global supply chain transparency.

Meanwhile our efforts continue earnestly at home.

The UK is strengthening our already world-leading Modern Slavery Act.

A key focus is to increase transparency in supply chains. We were the first country globally to require businesses to report on tackling modern slavery in their operations and global supply chains.

Other landmark provisions include extending the reporting requirement to public bodies with a turnover of more than £36 million, as well as mandating that organisations publish their statements on the government registry.

We will introduce financial penalties for non-compliance under the Modern Slavery Act. We also became the first country to publish our own statement, and later this year we will publish individual statements for ministerial departments.

Looking ahead, the UK wants to make sure we continue to respond effectively to these terrible crimes.

For that reason, we are reviewing our modern slavery strategy now, and will publish a new strategy in Spring 2022.

I would like finish by paying tribute to the survivors of modern slavery, forced labour and human trafficking.

I urge you all to listen carefully to the most vulnerable in our societies, and to come together regionally and internationally to ensure this generation of victims is the last.

Thank you.

**Annex III****Statement by Mr. Juan Francisco Galli, Subsecretary of Interior of the Republic of Chile**

[Original: Spanish]

The Government of Chile wishes to be part of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Since 2008, Chile has had an action plan against human trafficking, which was updated this year. The Action Plan ensures coordination among more than 22 institutions in our country to deal with that scourge. As a Government, we have promoted the treatment of especially vulnerable people so as to prevent them from being the victims of human trafficking and smuggling networks; from being subjected to both sexual and labour exploitation; and, along with private institutions, from becoming the victims of that serious crime.

## Annex IV

### **Statement by Ms. Olga Revuk, Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine on European Integration**

Dear participants,

Contemporary challenges and threats, in particular on combating human trafficking, require the mobilization of a wide range of resources of each State, the establishment of inter-agency collaboration, and the development of national and transnational mechanisms for cooperation between Government and civil society.

Unfortunately, the military conflict caused by the ongoing Russian aggression on the territory of Ukraine was one of the first serious challenges for Ukraine on combating human trafficking.

The mass displacement of people from the occupied and war-torn regions, the search for a new place to live and work, the competition in the labour market, the search for and placement of children in educational institutions, all these have increased citizens' vulnerability and increased their risk of getting in human trafficking.

The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus has become a serious challenge in the field on combating human trafficking not only for Ukraine, but also for the whole world.

Loss of income due to the forced stay at home orders, social contacts, closed borders, and fear for their own health and the health of loved ones has increased the people's vulnerability to human trafficking.

The State ensures the smooth operation of the social services and the institutions that provide support to human trafficking victims, the availability of information on the mode of services provision and assistance, the access to effective justice.

Children who are compelled to stay at home spend much more time on the Internet than they used to. As in real life, children face dangers and challenges there.

State policy in this area is aimed at protecting the child in the digital environment, combining national and international ways of responding and preventing, increasing children's knowledge of how to protect themselves from possible risks on the world wide web and how to act in case of danger.

On 1 June 2020, on International Children's Day, the Government of Ukraine appointed a Coordinator for ending sexual exploitation and violence against children on the Internet.

On the average, about 200 people receive the status of a human trafficking victim annually. Of course, this does not reflect the real situation, since there are many questions about the identification of such persons and their readiness to seek help from government authorities.

The legal status of trafficked person is provided regardless of whether the victim is cooperating with law enforcement.

The amount of one-time financial assistance to a person who has been granted trafficked-person status has tripled since its imposition.

The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine is working actively to motivate citizens to seek help from State authorities by conducting information campaigns and increasing the level of support and social services.

In order to effectively counter modern challenges and threats, the State Social Program for Counteracting Human Trafficking for the period up to 2025 is continuing to be developed.

The Program will contain tasks and measures aimed at improving the mechanism for preventing human trafficking, to increase the effective identification of persons who commit human trafficking crimes, as well as to ensure the protection of the rights of human trafficking victims and to provide them with complex assistance.

Thank you for your attention.



**Annex V****Statement by Mr. Rob Stewart, Deputy Minister of Public Safety of Canada**

Mr. President, fellow delegates,

Thank you for allowing me to provide a few words on this important issue from Canada's perspective.

I want to begin by applauding the UN General Assembly for continuing to hold the complex, global issue of trafficking in persons as a priority for member states.

Canada shares the conviction that human trafficking is one of the most heinous crimes imaginable, preying on and trapping the vulnerable and marginalized.

Canada has also long recognized the importance of a comprehensive, coordinated and multifaceted approach to respond to human trafficking.

Since ratifying the UN Protocol, Canada has made significant progress in its fight against trafficking in persons.

In September, 2019, Canada launched the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking.

This provided us with a collaborative approach, which brings together all federal efforts under one strategic framework.

It also supports the Government's broader commitments.

That includes preventing and addressing gender-based violence and supporting the safety and security of at-risk and vulnerable populations, including indigenous peoples, children and youth.

Building on previous Government efforts, the Strategy focuses on prevention, protection, prosecutions and partnerships, as well as empowerment, to enhance support and services to victims and survivors, helping them regain control and independence.

It is backed up by major financial support, of \$57.22 million over five years, and \$10.28 million ongoing.

Mr. President, in the area of prevention, we have continued to develop information and awareness programmes aimed at our most at-risk populations.

We have made significant progress in our criminal justice system responses to trafficking in persons, through targeted training and legislative reforms.

The Government of Canada also continues to work with domestic partners to provide dedicated support and protection to victims, including trauma-informed services.

Internationally, Canada also continues to provide assistance to partners, working with UNODC and other organizations, including the IOM and INTERPOL, to provide technical assistance and capacity-building.

Canada also continues to work to address human trafficking within Government supply chains, including by expanding its Code of Conduct for Procurement to ensure that the Government's procurement supply chains are free of trafficking in persons.

A key challenge we all continue to face is that it is a crime that disproportionately affects women and girls.

Canada will continue to address the unacceptably high rates of sexual and gender-based violence experienced by women and girls, including through Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence, announced in 2017.

Canada agrees that a multidisciplinary and collaborative global response to trafficking in persons is critical.

And we remain committed to collaborating with the United Nations and all countries in order to prevent this crime, bringing those who commit it to justice, and to helping survivors go on to lead healthy and productive lives.

Thank you.

## Annex VI

### **Statement by Ms. Rosa Monteiro, Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality of Portugal**

Mr. President, Excellencies,

Portugal is fully committed to the prevention of and fight against trafficking in persons. We welcome the Political Declaration at this General Assembly on the appraisal of the Global Action Plan against trafficking in human beings.

Portugal is proud to have co-facilitated, together with Cape Verde, the very first Global Action Plan in 2010. All of our actions are in line with the most relevant international human rights instruments and development frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda.

Since 2012, Portugal has been part of the global awareness raising Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking, and we have proudly used the blue heart ever since in all national campaigns and actions.

In spite of the anti-trafficking initiatives developed in Portugal over the last decade, much more remains to be done, in the face of such a complex, multidimensional and constantly changing phenomenon.

Portugal is currently starting to draft our 5th National Action Plan, which will consolidate the victim-centred, gender-based and child-sensitive approaches.

Portugal provides support to all victims of trafficking in persons — both national and foreign. Victims have the right to subsistence, access to medical treatment, psychological assistance, protection, translation and interpretation services, as well as free legal advice.

Portugal has five shelters that provide support to women and men identified as victims of trafficking, regardless of their nationality, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, political orientation, socioeconomic aspects or any other status. This support is also extended to minor children of the victims. This year we launched a National Referral Mechanism for Children.

The National Observatory of Trafficking in Human Beings continues to consolidate data collection systems, fundamental for the development of evidence-based policies.

In conclusion, all member states bear a collective responsibility in combating this heinous crime. To do so, we need to cooperate and implement the four “P’s” – prevention, protection, prosecution and, most important, partnerships, as they will allow us to be one step ahead of the criminal networks and traffickers responsible for this global scourge.

## Annex VII

### **Statement by Mr. Ajay Kumar Mishra, Minister of State for Home Affairs of the Republic of India**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, we thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this high-level meeting and commend the adoption of the 2021 Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

India recognizes that human trafficking is a serious crime and accords high priority to combating trafficking. The Government of India is making continuous and concerted efforts to prevent and counter trafficking in persons.

India's anti-trafficking legislative framework is based on the bedrock of article 23 of the Constitution of India. With the amendment to our criminal law in 2013, trafficking has been defined comprehensively and provisions have been made for the stringent punishment of traffickers.

In 2019, the National Investigation Agency Act of 2008 was amended whereby the National Investigation Agency was authorized to investigate cases of human trafficking.

A number of schemes focusing on the rescue, rehabilitation and repatriation of victims of trafficking have been instituted by the Government of India which address specific areas that are victim-centric.

The Government of India, in association with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), had initiated a multi-year project training for law enforcement officers on human trafficking.

The Government of India supports the country's state governments in strengthening the institutional mechanism to combat human trafficking.

A national level communication platform — the Crime Multi-Agency Centre (Cri- MAC) — was launched by the Government of India in March 2020 to facilitate the dissemination of information about significant crimes, including human trafficking cases across the country, on a real-time basis, and to enable effective inter-State coordination by police officers.

India is determined to combat the scourge of human trafficking and remains committed to extending cooperation to all Member States in preventing and countering human trafficking.

Thank you.



**Annex VIII****Statement by Ms. Naela Gabr, Chair of the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons of the Arab Republic of Egypt**

[Original: Arabic]

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since 2007, Egypt has striven to eradicate trafficking in persons by establishing an effective national legal and institutional framework that is based on punishing perpetrators, providing protection and support to victims and strengthening the national referral mechanism.

According to various national and international reports, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has been a significant factor in the rising incidence of trafficking in persons. Informal workers in Egypt are one of the most marginalized groups because they are vulnerable to threats and shocks in the workplace and ineligible to participate in social security or insurance schemes. In response, President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi has issued a number of decisions, such as allocating 1 billion Egyptian pounds to fund the comprehensive plan to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The Hayah Karimah or “Decent Life” presidential initiative, launched in 2019, has gone a long way in alleviating the burden on members of the most impoverished communities in rural areas and urban slums. Moreover, national institutions have bolstered their capabilities by forming units to combat various forms of crime perpetrated through social media.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to underscore the role of the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons, which I am honoured to preside over. It is a consultative body that reports to the Prime Minister of Egypt in accordance with Act No. 82 of 2016, with a current membership comprising 30 national agencies. The National Coordinating Committee is dedicated to providing all forms of protection to those groups that are at greatest risk of exploitation, extending support to victims and facilitating their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. During the pandemic, the National Coordinating Committee successfully addressed the repercussions of the pandemic by conducting campaigns to raise awareness of the various forms of trafficking in persons and setting up hotlines to report trafficking cases. The Committee opened a new dedicated shelter for women and child victims compliant with the highest international standards. We have also trained our staff and provide them with continuous training to build the capacities of persons responsible for the administration of justice, social workers, workers in the field, medical examiners and labour inspectors.

In conclusion, I wish to highlight that an “alternative opportunities” unit has been established, providing an updated database of employment opportunities on a single electronic platform that brings together all data. We have also signed a protocol on cooperation between the National Committee and the General Union of Associations and Civic Foundations, which represents more than 52,000 non-governmental organizations, to raise awareness of the dangers associated with all forms of exploitation. The President’s decision to declare 2022 the year of civil society attests to the importance we attach to civil society and illustrates the country’s integrated approach to the pandemic, addressing legislative, institutional and social aspects, in order to protect the people and society from all forms of exploitation.

Thank you.

## **Annex IX**

### **Australia**

[no statement submitted]

**Annex X****Statement by Mr. Jean-Claude Brunet, Ambassador for Transnational Crime Threats of France**

[Original: French]

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

France welcomes the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Global Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

We are convinced that this text will make it possible to draw attention to the urgent need to further strengthen concretely and collectively our effectiveness in action and cooperation against these transnational organized crimes at a time when this scourge, as Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the UNODC, pointed out this morning, is growing in strength throughout the world. France has made this fight a major priority in the defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms and in the fight against organized crime. Trafficking in human beings, which seriously affects the integrity and dignity of millions of people around the world, has become one of the most lucrative activities of organized crime.

We have seen very worrying developments in recent years, both in terms of the degree of violence and the highly organized and increasingly transnational nature, particularly in the context of migration, of which trafficking is one of the related phenomena, clearly linked to the smuggling of migrants.

The COVID-19 pandemic initially had the effect of curbing some trafficking activities, in the context of the drastic containment measures. However, the increased use of the Internet then had a lasting and multiplier effect on the increased capacity of these criminal services to reach and expand their target group. The pandemic has therefore multiplied the fronts on which our fight against trafficking must now be waged. We hope that the Global Action Plan will enable us to further mobilize, in each of our countries and collectively, through cooperation and international assistance and mutual police and criminal assistance so as to make the relevant provisions of the major international instruments, such as the Palermo United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, together with its protocols against the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, even more universal and effective. France is also committed through European directives, its participation in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and the norms and mechanisms for peer-to-peer exchanges within the OSCE. Since 2013, France has particularly mobilized against this scourge through a better coordinated inter-ministerial approach, led by an inter-ministerial mission (MIPROF), and based on two successive national action plans. The current second national action plan (2019-2022) covers a holistic and broad approach to action, integrating all aspects, from prevention, the identification of victims, their protection, education and the training of specialists to enforcement and international cooperation.

The national action plan is fully in line with the new EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025), in its national and international aspects.

France has been following this approach since its first national action plan: the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs has been providing support in a number of ways to both:

1/ promoting the universalization of international standards

2/ promoting good practices, particularly through the laws of 13 April 2016 aimed at strengthening the fight against the prostitution system and the protection of victims and of 27 March 2017, on the duty of care of parent companies and contractors with regard to the human rights, health and safety of personnel.

3/ lastly, the development and financing (particularly also through co-financing with the EU) of cooperation and assistance programmes in two major regions in particular: South-East Europe and West Africa/Gulf of Guinea.

With the aim of combating all forms of trafficking, in 2019 we joined the international Blue Heart Campaign, which now includes some 30 countries, and we have strengthened political dialogue with many partners on these issues. Foreign Ministers Jean-Yves Le Drian and Margot Wallström adopted a Franco-Swedish strategy to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation on International Women's Rights Day, 8 March 2019.

As the President of the Republic stated at the Paris Peace Forum on 11 November, "it is our responsibility, both Government and private actors, to set out a clear framework to better protect minors, children, in the digital world". President Macron called for action in this area. As proof of its commitment, France is a candidate for the status of "pioneer country" within the Alliance 8.7, a global partnership against child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery. It has also just launched a national plan on the protection of children against prostitution and sexual exploitation, which will also develop a comprehensive, cross-cutting and concrete approach, mobilizing all inter-ministerial partners in a targeted action and in close collaboration with civil society, for prevention, the identification of victims and a more systematic and organized fight against criminal networks.

Mr. President,

The common objective of all our actions, those developed by France in its national action plans and those of our international cooperation, is really twofold: on the one hand, the earlier and more systematic identification of victims, their protection and the assistance provided to give them a better future; on the other hand, a genuine end to impunity for the criminals who exploit them, who must be dealt through all the channels and means of investigation and prevention and with international support, including from civil society and the private sector.

That is why the idea of a Global Action Plan, a genuine pact by the entire international community to support these fundamental objectives and human dignity, seems to us to be particularly important today and to be in line with the highest standards and values held by the United Nations.

Thank you for your attention.

**Annex XI****Statement by Mr. Joel Adrián Mena Sorett, Head of the National Office to Combat Organized Crime and Terrorism Financing of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**

[Original: Spanish]

Mr. President,

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting on the appraisal of the UN United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons — a heinous crime that violates human dignity and human rights — the prevention and eradication of which are the urgent duty of the international community.

Mr. President,

This fitting opportunity to appraise the Global Plan compels us to renew our resolve to fully comply with international law and strengthen our focus on dialogue and cooperation, in strict adherence with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the principle of the non-politicization and non-selectivity of the issue, while prioritizing prevention as the cornerstone of public policies in the area.

With regard to Venezuela, it maintains that the complexity of the issue demands that its victim-centred approach be focused on human rights and international law, not security, which is used by some States for political ends, while they refuse to maintain transparent cooperation.

Venezuela shares 2,219 kilometres of border with Colombia, and the latter's Government attacks Venezuela, protects criminals and is unable to control its borders.

The Venezuelan State is continuously and directly engaged in combating criminal networks involved in human trafficking. Certain States must act with political and moral consistency and stop efforts aimed at political and economic destabilization, invasions and wars in sovereign States to further their geopolitical interests in order to avoid regretting later the tragic consequences of such actions seen throughout the world today, such as the increase in human trafficking.

Within that context, we must draw attention to how the destabilization campaign against Venezuela, based on the illegal imposition of Unilateral Coercive Measures, coupled with the unwillingness of some of those States to comply with their international obligations and cooperate with our country, only benefits and strengthens the illegal trafficking networks, in addition to fostering discrimination, xenophobia, slavery, exploitation, basic rights violations and increased suffering for the victims. That is why we emphasize the fact that only respectful dialogue, cooperation among actors on an equal footing and the lifting of those measures can constructively contribute to ending the criminal networks.

Similarly, Venezuela rejects all reports and unilateral lists established with the purpose of criminalizing other States, based on subjective and political perceptions that, instead of contributing to, only weaken multilateralism, increase the politicization of the issue and undermine national and international efforts in combating this scourge.



Mr. President,

Statistics in recent years reflect the alarming increase in this category of crime, which counts mostly women and children among its victims. The commodification of people constitutes a heinous offence and a crime against humanity condemned by the Venezuelan State under our Constitution. In addressing this reality, as part of its commitment to combat human trafficking, the Venezuelan Government adopted this year the 2021-2025 national plan to combat human trafficking and established the National Council to Combat Human Trafficking, which provides continuity and impetus to developing our national institutions' comprehensive policies, together with the People's Power and the relevant international organizations, in order to prevent, address, suppress, punish and eradicate this crime, with a focus on gender and the most vulnerable populations, which are accorded the highest priority on a daily basis.

The Global Plan of Action continues to serve as an important guide in the implementation of various strategies to strengthen prevention and enforcement in specific areas of action and takes into account new *modus operandi*, including the quintessential tool of cybercrime, on which progress must be made through international agreements.

Lastly, Venezuela reaffirms its commitment and resolve to continue upholding its obligations under the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto in order to eliminate definitively situations leading to this crime, while guaranteeing the protection and recovery of its victims and survivors in line with their rights and dignity.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

## Annex XII

### Statement by Ms. Madalina Turza, Counselor of State of Romania

Your excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Romania, the anti-trafficking system has constantly evolved over time, both in terms of legal, institutional, operational framework but also from the viewpoint of how the institutions positioned themselves, understood the phenomenon in an evolving manner and acted upon it.

Presently, our system of fighting human trafficking is a coherent one, aligned with the principle of the 4 Ps (Prevention, Prosecution, Protection, Partnership) and has proven, on numerous occasions, its functionality. Still, there are things to be done as we are speaking about a process in which both the desire and the capacity for improvement are important.

The global pandemic context in the past two years challenged us on multiple levels, including in terms of fighting this phenomenon. Data showed us that trafficking in persons has evolved more insidiously towards online recruitment and exploitation, and vulnerable persons, including children, became even more vulnerable and exposed.

In this context, the Romanian Government at the initiative of our Prime-minister, made a strategic decision: the coordination of the fight against trafficking in persons was taken over, directly, at the level of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister.

Moreover, the new pandemic context showed us that we need to strengthen our response when it comes to online threats, especially when it comes to children, and this is why we have invested in a state-of-the-art system of cybercrime forensics for the National Police. We are currently developing an Amber Alert for missing children and a national toll-free number for exploited and abused children and teenagers, as well hearing rooms with dedicated multidisciplinary teams, as well for children victims of crimes.

From a different perspective, Romania has now a dedicated section of prosecutors for trafficking in persons' cases, and thousands of hours of specialized training have been delivered to various front-liners working with victims. Prevention activities are constantly implemented in schools and in communities together with civil society, which plays a crucial role in our fight.

As well, Romania is currently developing alongside public, private and NGO partners a national plan for adequate medical assistance for victims and proactive identification of victims through medical workers because we understood that just the free access to medical services for this category of persons is not enough.

But there is still much to be done. Because fighting against trafficking in persons is not a matter JUST of national involvement.

The means and methods of reducing "supply" will never be entirely effective without sustained actions to reduce and discourage "demand" for human trafficking.

And Romania made this point also at the European level.

We need a coherent approach to the impunity and deterrence of demand that underlies this phenomenon, and for this we need international solidarity.

In the end, I would like to encourage you, the world leaders, to think at the words of Gary Haugen, IJM President:

When our grandchildren ask us where we were when the voiceless and the vulnerable of our era needed leaders of compassion and purpose, I hope we can say that we showed up IN TIME.

Thank you!

## **Annex XIII**

### **Azerbaijan**

[no statement submitted]

## Annex XIV

### **Statement by Mr. Kifah Al-Naddaf, Head of Investigation in the Department of Anti-Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior of the Syrian Arab Republic**

[Original: Arabic]

National data on crimes of trafficking in persons in the Syrian Arab Republic

Trafficking in persons in its various forms at the international, regional and global levels has become one of the most pressing legal issues of the day, garnering the concern of all countries and numerous international and regional organizations. Through its various organs, the United Nations has called for addressing this offence, which is considered a form of organized crime. The Organization has also concluded several agreements, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

The Syrian Arab Republic has contributed to the international effort to combat trafficking in persons by, inter alia, acceding to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two Additional Protocols thereto, namely, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. It has also remained abreast of practical research on crimes of trafficking in persons. Syria recently participated in Operation Liberta, an operation carried out in coordination with the International Criminal Police Organization to root out trafficking in persons and human smuggling. In addition, Syria issued Legislative Decree No. 3 (2010) on the prevention of trafficking in persons as part of its comprehensive approach to tackling those crimes.

The 22 articles comprising the decree set forth a comprehensive strategy to combat trafficking in persons. The international planning of trafficking crimes is a central element of the phenomenon, which is global in nature and spares no society or country. The strategy is centred on principles, objectives, criminalization, prosecution, victim protection, strengthened international cooperation and robust partnerships.

The security services draw upon scientific research on criminology, research on criminal phenomena in general or on particular crimes. The many data-gathering methods in criminology research include experimental research, observation, cohort studies, case studies, questionnaires, comparative studies, social surveys and statistical verification.

Law enforcement authorities in Syria have found statistical indicators to be negative because of the terrorist war being waged against Syria and the spread of trafficking in persons. This phenomenon was not known in its current form before 2011 and has since emerged as a result of migration, the absence of family supervision and the unjust economic sanctions imposed on Syria. Consequently, law enforcement authorities have had to redouble their efforts to prosecute these offences on the ground. Between 2010 and October 2021, there have been 1,222 cases of trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation, 100 cases of smuggling of girls for sale into prostitution and 284 cases of exploitation of domestic workers. There are 47 cases of trade in human organs, 22 cases of trafficking in persons involving the sale



of children, 540 cases of trafficking in persons for begging and 136 criminal cases of human smuggling being investigated.

Attempts to ascertain the actual, real incidence of trafficking in persons worldwide fail to capture the full magnitude of the phenomenon. Owing to varying definitions of certain terms related to trafficking in persons, and to the absence of adequate oversight in areas where exploitation occurs and where the monies and proceeds of those crimes are laundered, statistics concerning the number of victims vary and cannot be estimated effectively. This can be attributed to the lack of a uniform international database standard. For instance, the use of children in begging is considered a form of trafficking in certain States, while in others, begging is considered a crime but not a form of trafficking. Moreover, understanding varies as to the circumstances that place illegal migrants at risk of being trafficked.

We attach a detailed table for each year containing statistics on crimes of trafficking in persons that were committed between 2010 and 2021.

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