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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Beijing Changier Education Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Empowering Potential Victims – A Call for Enhanced Education on the Dangers of Human Trafficking

From our long history marked by the plight of peasants in the Middle Ages and the injustices of slavery, one might expect that, as conscientious members of society, we would have learned from centuries of suffering. Yet, despite the prohibition of forced labor, human trafficking persists as one of the world's most extensive illegal industries, blatantly violating basic human rights. Young women and girls are incessantly kidnapped, deceived, sold, coerced, and forced into slavery and sex work against their will, robbing them of their inherent rights.

Research into human trafficking reveals varying statistics on how many people are abducted globally each year, especially in developing countries where the crime is most prevalent. The secretive nature and simplicity of operations allow traffickers to commit these crimes with alarming frequency. The basic yet elusive logistics of trafficking enable traffickers to face minimal risks while garnering substantial rewards, making human trafficking a lucrative illegal industry dependent on a cruel supply and demand of human lives, which are often undervalued in developing regions.

This issue has two main actors: the trafficker and the victim. Traffickers target the most vulnerable individuals—those who are easiest to exploit. To sustain their low-risk, high-reward operations, traffickers often prey on those affected by relocation, substance abuse, mental health issues, homelessness, and unstable living conditions. Developing countries, plagued by political instability, war, poverty, and scarce resources, become fertile grounds for traffickers. In these settings, societal values may diminish due to the struggles people face, exacerbated by porous borders and corrupt governance.

Numerous organizations have already initiated efforts to combat trafficking. The United Nations has taken significant steps through capacity building, research, and partnerships with non-profit organizations. These efforts include support for victims, investigations on the origins of trafficking, and reforming legal and prosecutorial frameworks. In 2000, the United Nations also developed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, which has been signed by 177 countries that committed to implementing protective and preventive measures. Despite considerable advancements, a critical area that remains untouched is the education towards potential victims.

The role of victims in inadvertently facilitating trafficking is notable, as their vulnerability and lack of awareness often lead them into these dire situations. Many victims believe that any alternative would be better than their current intolerable conditions, not realizing the potential for even worse outcomes with traffickers. Those who are trafficked are stripped from their most basic rights, suffer extreme violence, abuse, and exploitation, enduring traumas that can impact them for a lifetime. Thus, informing victims is essential to addressing this challenge.

Our proposal particularly focuses on the empowerment and education of potential victims through technological and in person programs. Here are a couple of recommendations:

1. **Comprehensive Educational Campaigns:** Initiate and spread educational initiatives that comprehensively cover the dangers of human trafficking. These programs should incorporate real-world examples, warning signs, and actionable steps for those who suspect they might be at risk. It's essential that these educational efforts are adapted for various age groups and translated into numerous languages to ensure wide accessibility. By arming young girls with knowledge and the means to resist traffickers, they are protecting their rights and minimizing their risk of exploitation.
2. **Community Engagement Initiatives:** Foster community involvement through workshops that include local leaders, educators, and activists. These engagements can build local support within the community that play a key role in both preventing human trafficking and aiding those who are vulnerable. Additionally, offering in person, hands-on demonstrations and educational sessions, particularly in areas with limited access to digital resources, can significantly boost the effectiveness of these efforts.

3. **Partnerships with Technology Companies:** Work in tandem with technology firms to create platforms that support the battle against human trafficking. This could include applications that educate and provide resources, as well as platforms that improve the reporting and monitoring of suspicious behavior.
4. **Use of Media and Influencers:** Leverage both traditional media and social media influencers to spread awareness about human trafficking. Campaigns that achieve broad reach can generate significant public attention and pressure for action. In today's age of technology, social media serves as a potent educational tool that can inform young girls about the dangers of human trafficking and methods of self-protection can shift the industry towards greater risk for traffickers. Sharing stories from survivors, defensive strategies, and preventive advice can directly connect with potential victims.
5. **Focus on At-Risk Populations:** Allocate our focus and resources on demographic groups that are most susceptible to trafficking, such as migrants, refugees, and residents in high-poverty, low-education areas. Targeted support can help mitigate the risks these populations face and provide them with ways they can protect themselves with.

We strongly urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to integrate these recommendations into a comprehensive strategy. For the sake of maintaining these young girls' human rights, we hope that through this platform, they themselves get a fuller picture of what they're at risk for, gain resilience against traffickers, and reduce the rate at which they are affected.
