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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 The Institute for Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR), 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.

[19 August 2024]

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



Contemporary Forms of Slavery in Europe and the United States of America: Child Trafficking

In many ways, slavery may look different from the slavery of the Transatlantic slave trade, but modern slavery – as a term – encompasses many forms of slavery, including human trafficking. Therefore, human trafficking is a form of modern slavery that contains the use of violence, threats or coercion to transport, recruit or harbour people in order to exploit them for purposes such as forced prostitution, labour, criminality, marriage or organ removal. We are addressing you today to bring to your urgent attention the alarming issue of child trafficking in Europe and the United States of America as one of the modern forms of slavery. Slavery and human trafficking are violations of human rights because these acts strip human beings of their inherent rights. In fact, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly references slavery, stating in Article 4: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. Despite significant international efforts to combat this heinous crime, child trafficking remains a pervasive problem that demands immediate and sustained global action.

Violation of International Laws and Human Rights Child trafficking is a grave violation of numerous international laws and conventions. First and foremost, it breaches the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), particularly Articles 34 and 35, which explicitly call for the protection of children from all forms of sexual exploitation, abuse, and abduction for any purpose, including trafficking. Moreover, child trafficking contravenes the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This protocol requires states to criminalize trafficking and take measures to protect and support victims. In Europe and the United States of America, child trafficking also violates the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), particularly Article 4, which prohibits slavery and forced labor. Additionally, it infringes upon the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in the United States of America, which mandates stringent measures to combat human trafficking and protect victims.

The statistics surrounding child trafficking in Europe and the United States of America are deeply concerning. According to a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), it is estimated that globally, over 1 million children are trafficked annually, with a significant number of cases reported in Europe and the United States of America. The United States of America's Department of Justice reports that thousands of children in the United States of America fall victim to trafficking each year, many of whom are exploited for sexual purposes. In Europe, a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) report indicated that between 2017 and 2021, over 5,000 children were identified as victims of trafficking across the EU, though the actual number is likely much higher due to underreporting and the clandestine nature of the crime. The 2024 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, that provides global statistics on child trafficking, claims that 133,943 victims were globally identified in 2023, an increase from 115,324 in 2022. In the United States of America, the hotline received reports of 9,877 potential trafficking cases referencing 9,432 potential victims. 57% of cases were potential sex trafficking, 16% were potential labor trafficking. In Europe, 32,996 victims were identified and 1,667 convictions were obtained. The report also highlights the increase in the use of technology by traffickers and the need for greater collaboration between governments, NGOs, and the private sector to combat this issue .

In light of these violations and the ongoing suffering of countless children, we urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to take actions by strengthening international cooperation and encouraging member states to enhance cross-border cooperation and intelligence-sharing to dismantle trafficking networks effectively; and holding countries accountable for enforcing existing laws and conventions related to child trafficking, and impose sanctions on those that fail to protect vulnerable children.

Child trafficking is not just a crime; it is a gross violation of human rights that shatters the lives of innocent children. We must act with urgency and resolve to protect the most vulnerable among us. The international community has both a legal and moral obligation to end child trafficking and ensure that every child can live free from fear, exploitation, and abuse.