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Statement submitted by League of Women Voters of the United States, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking — these are problems that are generations old yet new in this day and age of instant communications and advancements in technology, medicine, and other areas of well-being. Why is it that this problem is now a lucrative industry that cannot be eradicated?

The League of Women Voters of the United States is joining many other voices in understanding that because it is so lucrative an industry (International Labour Organization estimates that it is \$150 Billion), until the demand is dramatically diminished, there will always be a supply of offenders preying on the most vulnerable. Therefore, we join with other voices in recognizing areas to deter and eliminate the demand.

- **Forced Labour Trafficking** — we have all heard countless stories of victims being pressed into servitude and bondage for a variety of reasons. Many times the victim is seeking a better life and is duped by dishonest brokers and recruiters. Sometimes, children are kidnapped and subjected to being child soldiers or victimized in mines, construction or garment manufacturing. The other end of the equation is those that pay the traffickers for these services either through the purchase of the goods or via services. Many times, legitimate multi-national corporations are unaware that they have been duped as well, not recognizing that slavery is contained in their supply or service chains.
- **Sex Trafficking** — many states are finally recognizing that this is not a victimless crime. In the United States, children that are involved in prostitution are now viewed as victims. What about children that are sold as child brides or whose parents are trying to lift the child out of poverty and provide a better opportunity and life? These parents can be duped, when their child is forced to service dozens of men a day or be subjected to rape, beatings and other forms of violence. What about the buyers, do they not have a responsibility to understand that the person that they are “buying or renting” is being coerced?

Therefore, in using the High Level Political Forum and the United Nations agencies as a means to eliminate and/or deter forced labour and human trafficking, the League of Women Voters of the United States offers to work with multi-sectoral actors including the United Nations, member states, public sector, academia, media and other non-governmental organizations to:

1. Raise awareness in the private sector of the issue of forced labour so that they will pledge to act and eliminate it in their supply and service chains;
2. Advocate for laws that prosecute the buyers of trafficked services;
3. Stress the importance of teaching respect of women and girls so that buyers are more aware of all human rights;
4. Share best practices in fighting the demand side of the human trafficking equation including the business aspects of it — money laundering and corruption.

We promote the goals of the International Labour Organization’s Alliance 8.7 as an instrument to coordinate activities in fighting this terrible scourge.