



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

## **POST-REGM REPORT**

# **FACILITATING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS IN COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

**26-27 NOVEMBER 2020  
ONLINE**



## **BACKGROUND**

On 26-27 November 2020, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) - in collaboration with Bulgaria's National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and with support from France's Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs - held an online REGM on '**Facilitating Cooperation Between the Public and Private Sectors in Combating Trafficking in Persons in South Eastern Europe**'. The REGM involved a high number of participating experts from the SEE region including from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. Participants came from a range of organisations, which included governments, private sector companies, non-governmental organisations, and academic institutions, all with a vested interest in addressing human trafficking through stronger partnerships.

The purpose of the REGM was to facilitate focused, constructive, solution-oriented and critical discussions related to preventing and combating trafficking in persons through PPPs. Participants analysed the current challenges posed by trafficking to the private sector; exchanged good practices on how to better engage on human trafficking prevention and shared experiences on innovative approaches to addressing human trafficking at the country and/or regional level. This allowed for an opportunity to strengthen the engagement of the private sector in order to effectively support Member States' implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

This REGM was part of a series of regional consultations forming part of the broader UNODC project 'Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Fostering Engagement with the Private Sector on the Implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its Trafficking in Persons Protocol' ('PPP Project'). Insights and recommendations will inform UNODC's Compendium of best practices on successful PPPs, which will be launched in late 2021.



## **REGM CONCLUSIONS**

- Multi-stakeholder collaboration was crucial in order to improve our capabilities in preventing and countering TIP.
- This REGM had allowed experts from a whole host of backgrounds and areas of expertise to come together with the underlying passion for and goal to try to effectively address human trafficking and this was reflected in both the plenary sessions and in the breakout group sessions.
- Many good experiences had been shared and lessons learned. Everyone's knowledge base around what works and what doesn't in PPPs to address human trafficking had also been enhanced as a result of the REGM.
- A key point coming from the REGM was that the protection of survivors of trafficking had to be a part of PPPs, where private sector could have an instrumental role in breaking the human trafficking cycle.
- It was clear that technology, financial intelligence and coordination within the supply chain was needed as part of an effective anti-trafficking strategy and to form part of PPPs.
- The second 2020 REGM focused on Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean was mentioned, and participants were asked to inform their colleagues in the region for possible participation.

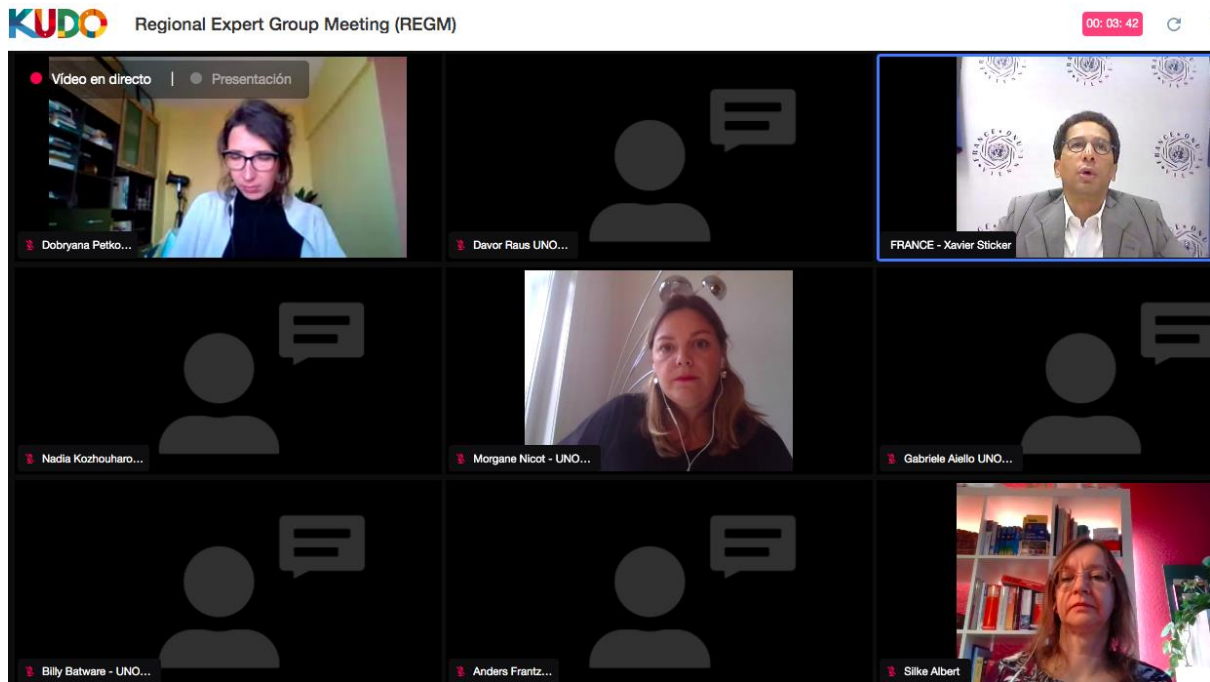
## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNODC**

- Facilitate more cooperation and trust-building between the private sector, NGO communities and governments and convene dialogues between multi-stakeholder groups.
- Establish a clear share-point between governmental, private sector and civil society actors to improve information exchange and to assist in the prevention and countering of TIP.
- Find solutions that addresses private sector data privacy concerns when balancing between protecting victims of trafficking on the one hand and consumer privacy on the other.

## The REGM Proceedings

### Day One

The day started with some esteemed speakers providing opening remarks to commence the REGM.



Morgane Nicot of the HTMSS at UNODC began by emphasising the need to involve the private sector in addressing trafficking in persons and touched upon UNODC’s PPP Project.

H.E. Xavier Sticker, Permanent Representative of France to the UN and other International Organisations discussed the need to find innovative ways to fight human trafficking, including the use of technology which also has a role in facilitating the crime. He highlighted the importance of including economic operators and businesses in discussions and provided concrete examples of how the IT, banking and hospitality sectors could help to expose the crime. Finally, he discussed France’s efforts in countering TIP through its inter-ministerial body to combat violence against women.

Dobryana Petkova, Executive Secretary of the Bulgarian Anti-Trafficking Commission, National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of Bulgaria, focused on the globalised economy and its complex supply chains which made it difficult for buyers and consumers to be sure that goods and services purchased were not produced out of forced labour. She discussed the needs for businesses and governments to perform due diligence to prevent abuses and referred to the UK as a best practice.

Silke Albert of HTMSS UNODC stressed the importance for all sectors to cooperate, as trafficking was widespread in all sectors. She highlighted that international organisations have

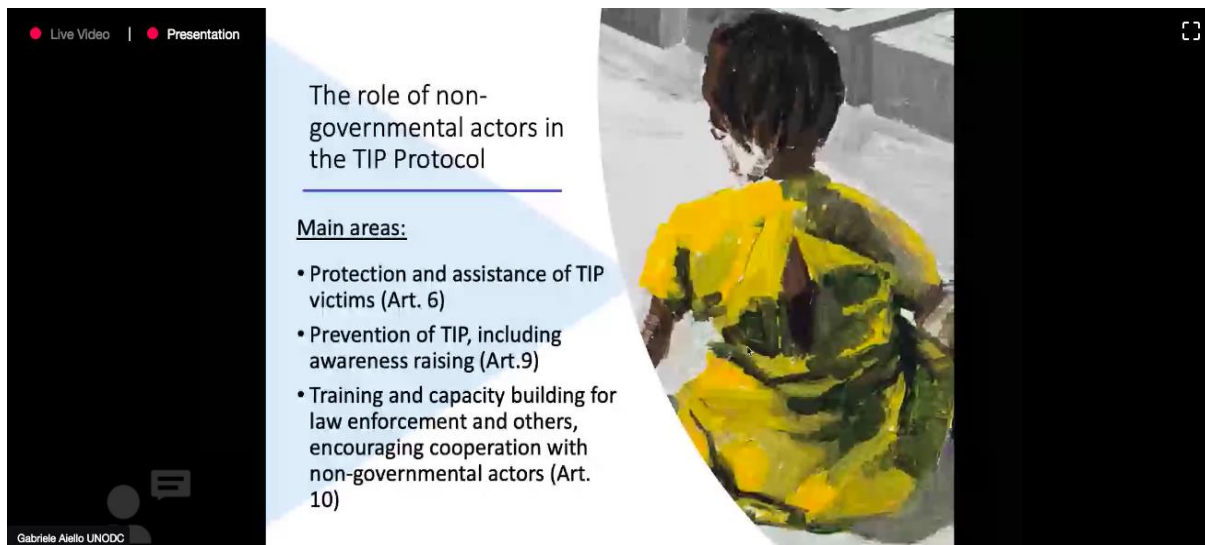
important responsibilities to address human trafficking, not simply governments and businesses.

Following the first panel session, Davor Raus, UNODC then presented the concept and methodology of the REGM, as well as the broader PPP Project, which would focus on PPPs as they relate to countering trafficking from within three areas: the **supply chain, financial and technology** sectors.

The second part of Day 1 involved a stimulating second panel session moderated by Erwann Tor, Regional Expert on the Fight Against Trafficking on Human Beings and Connected Crimes, Permanent Mission of France to the UN and International Organisations, on the institutional legal and institutional framework and role, capacity and experience of organisations in preventing and combating trafficking in persons within the context of PPPs.

Speakers of this panel included Gabriele Aiello, HTMSS UNODC, Petya Nestorova, Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, Valiant Richey, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Antoaneta Vassileva and Nadia Kozhouharova, Representatives of Animus Association Foundation / La Strada Bulgaria.

Gabriele Aiello explained the importance of UNTOC and its Trafficking in Persons Protocol and its relevance to the PPP Project.



The screenshot shows a presentation slide with a dark background and white text. At the top left, there are two red circular icons labeled 'Live Video' and 'Presentation'. The slide title is 'The role of non-governmental actors in the TIP Protocol'. Below the title, there is a section titled 'Main areas:' followed by a bulleted list of three points. To the right of the text is a painting of a person in a yellow and green patterned shirt, seen from behind. At the bottom left of the slide, the name 'Gabriele Aiello UNODC' is visible.

Live Video | Presentation

### The role of non-governmental actors in the TIP Protocol

Main areas:

- Protection and assistance of TIP victims (Art. 6)
- Prevention of TIP, including awareness raising (Art.9)
- Training and capacity building for law enforcement and others, encouraging cooperation with non-governmental actors (Art. 10)

Gabriele Aiello UNODC

Petya Nestorova discussed the Council of Europe's (CoE) work on human trafficking and explained the various relevant CoE legal instruments, as well as current CoE strategies, experiences and trends from the region.

Valiant Richey emphasised that we needed more than law enforcement to address human trafficking and the potential of the private sector to assist in combating the crime is enormous. He drew examples of OSCE's work in the technology and financial sectors.

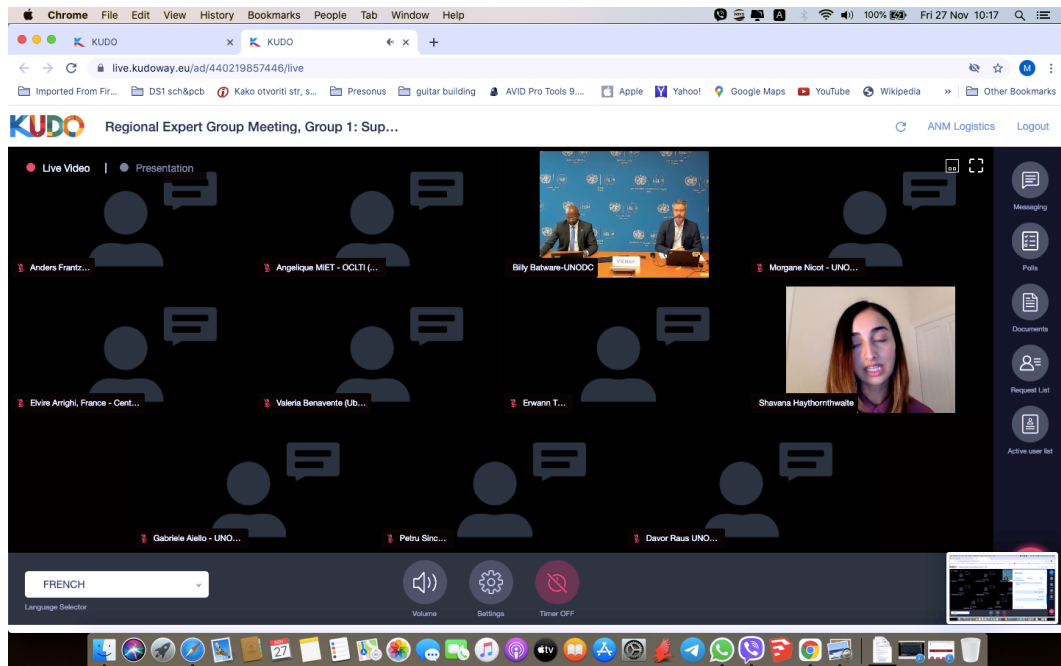
Antoaneta Vasilleva and Nadia Kozhouharova discussed Animus' experience and campaigns on the prevention of labour exploitation and gave some insight on the social studies that they had conducted with business partners.



## Day Two

Anders Frantzen, UNODC and Shavana Haythornthwaite, UNODC opened the second day of the REGM. They provided a recap of Day 1 and informed participants of what they should expect during Day 2, including their own contributions to the following key questions:

- i. *What are the main challenges in creating PPPs to address trafficking in persons in the supply chain, financial institutions and the technology sector?*
- ii. *What do you believe are current best practices around PPPs to prevent and counter trafficking in persons? If you are able to, please try to draw on concrete and real-life examples of such PPPs from within your own area of work.*
- iii. *Based on the challenges and best practices, what lessons and recommendations are you able to make to ensure effective PPPs to prevent and counter trafficking in persons?*
- iv. *What role do you believe international organizations (such as UNODC) and civil society should have as far as PPPs to prevent and counter trafficking in persons are concerned?*



Participants were then allocated to one of three breakout groups, each focusing on either the supply chain, the technology sector or financial institutions. The aim of the breakout sessions was to allow participants to dig deeper into how we implement PPPs to address human trafficking in a coordinated, sustainable and innovative manner. The sessions provided each participant an opportunity to discuss their own experience of PPPs, including on lessons learnt.

### **Breakout Group One (Supply Chain)**

#### **Key points:**

This breakout session focused on how PPPs could help to prevent and counter trafficking from within the supply chain. The key points of discussion were:

- There is a need for a paradigm shift, where legislation is important but not the only solution.
- Trade unions need to be included within PPPs, as well as more private sector entities which is currently missing in SEE.
- General public support is key to raise awareness and to apply pressure on the private sector for more ethical supply chains.
- An understanding of the context of geographical regions like the SEE region is key to creating effective anti-trafficking solutions and PPPs.
- France's mandate on fighting illegal labour was presented, including their Duty of Vigilance act.
- The protection and empowerment of victims is vital to addressing human trafficking. This is even more so now with COVID-19 which has severely exacerbated the situation.
- PPPs to combat TIP should be prioritised much more within the political agenda of governments, including through more incentives.

## **Breakout Group Two (Technology)**

### **Key points:**

This session brought together participants from the technology sector to discuss how technology-based PPPs could help to prevent and counter TIP and what the challenges were in doing so. The key points of discussion were:

- Investigations can be more effective as part of PPPs.
- Secondments from the private sector into law enforcement can be useful, as was done at Western Union. Western Union appointed one employee for the disposal of the French police. This role has allowed more efficient ways of detecting and reporting money laundering activities.
- Technologies for scanning shipping containers are limited; although there are some options for detection through the assessment of elevated CO2 levels.
- The main challenge is the sheer scale and logistics of TIP.
- Technology aids the perpetrators as much as (maybe more) than it aids law enforcement.
- No company is immune to the crime. Criminals will always use different tools for their own purposes.
- Differing national legislation on intelligence sharing makes data sharing PPPs difficult. For example, in Bulgaria, in order to request data from IT companies about phone conversations or even internet chats, evidence or at least strong suspicion that a crime is being committed needs to be provided. Yet, in order to show that a crime has been committed you need that very same data on those servers.
- Internet providers often do not think that it is their duty to monitor what is on their servers and it is the state's responsibility to investigate and prosecute crimes. However, technology companies have an enormous responsibility to address human trafficking.
- It is vital to actively prevent and detect potential perpetrators and victims.
- Companies do not have a dedicated law enforcement function. This could be very valuable.
- Formalized cooperation between the public and private sectors is important, particularly where there are conflicts of interest.

## **Breakout Group Three (Financial Institutions):**

### **Key Points:**

This session focused on the discussion of best practice and lessons learnt from within the financial sector on PPPs. Key points of discussion were:

- There was a desire for government in the region to work more closely with private sector since cooperation only occurred via subpoenas.
- A consistent challenge that comes up with PPPs within the financial sector is the protection of data privacy when sharing information between the public and private sectors.



- Another challenge for the public sector is navigating all the different departments and processes within private companies.
- It is important to establish functional cooperation and trust for effective PPPs.
- Looking at the phone numbers connected to bank accounts is useful to identify perpetrators and whether trafficking in persons is occurring.
- Information sharing is key in cooperation, as organised criminals exploit loopholes, particularly in times like a global pandemic, where organised criminals can take advantage of the weaknesses of society.
- PPPs and collaboration to address human trafficking needs to be embedded in law. MOUs and voluntary efforts are not enough.



Erwann Tor and Morgane Nicot concluded the day's proceedings.

All in all, the REGM had been an enormous success and participants expressed their desire to continue working with UNODC to sustain the fight against TIP and collaborate with each other further.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- A second REGM to foster cooperation between the public and private sector in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean will be held in early December 2020.
- A third REGM to foster cooperation between the public and private sector in Asia will be held in early 2021.

- A Compendium of Promising Practices on PPPs to counter and prevent TIP is currently being compiled for launch and publication in late 2021.
- A new knowledge hub, named 'WhatsOn', is currently being created to enhance networking, coalition-building and to facilitate PPPs to address TIP. The Whatson platform will aim to serve as a knowledge hub for all relevant civil society, private sector and academic stakeholders working on issues related to countering transnational organised crime and corruption. It is expected that phase I of the knowledge hub will be ready for launch in March-April 2021. Initially, this will provide an easy-accessible overview of non-governmental stakeholders around the world, facilitating regional and/or thematic networks. Eventually, this will be built upon for a more interactive network in a phase II development, facilitating further ways for NGOs, academia and private sector to network and learn from each other on all areas related to UNTOC and UNCAC.