

**AGENDA ITEM ON THE COLLECTION OF INPUTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS AND PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON RELEVANT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THOSE RELATED TO MEETING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNTOC REVIEW MECHANISM**

**AGENDA ITEM IV**

**STATEMENT**

**GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME**

**Constructive Dialogue on Trafficking in Persons  
Vienna, 4 October 2023**

Thanks for giving me the floor. I make this statement on behalf of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

This statement focusses on the thematic points highlighted in the agenda item IV.

With regards to the role of non-governmental stakeholders in the universalization and implementation of the human trafficking protocol, it is important to highlight the monitoring role civil society can exercise in verifying whether the provisions have been properly incorporated into national laws and regulations, and also standardized. Civil society can help to assess if standards are respected so that improvement can be achieved in areas of exchange of information, data recording and sharing.

For the reasons we have heard throughout this session – it is thus far not possible to gain a realistic assessment of the implementation of the Protocol. Importantly it is difficult to assess the actual impact, as well as technical implementation, that the Protocol has had on the criminal markets concerned. Civil society can usefully fill in this gap, especially when more data starts being processed through the review mechanism – which can they be analysed and compared with other sets of data.

In relation to assistance needs and non-governmental stakeholders' engagement/participation, civil society and other stakeholders can ensure that the working group has access to more robust, timely data on human trafficking dynamics to help us understand human trafficking flows, including across borders, much better.

Available information from GI-TOC's Global Organized Crime Index – a first global analytical tool to provide an assessment of criminal markets, categories of criminal actors, and resilience capacity for 193 UN member states – ranks human trafficking as the second most pervasive market globally. The Index results show that human trafficking has in fact increased since 2020, the first year under study. It also shows that human trafficking correlates moderately with half of all the other criminal markets analysed by the Index, including cyber-dependent crimes. The continued growth of human trafficking serves as a sobering reminder of this market's impact on society, where humans are the transactional commodity.

The Index results also highlight the weakening role of civil society has significant implications for countries' vulnerability to organized crime, closing off alternative avenues for combating it. Civil society and the media can serve as watchdogs to hold state institutions to account, and many are closely engaged in communities heavily affected by organized crime. Yet tighter restrictions and censorship reduce the ability of these actors to serve as alternative sources of resilience to those provided by government. The substantive participation of all stakeholders – intergovernmental, state and non-state – in the conversation around the evolving threats of organized crime is critical in stepping up efforts to suppress and prevent organized crime, and reduce its impact on societies.

Moreover, civil society engagement can be crucial to facilitate collaboration. As with many human rights challenges, anti-trafficking efforts require partnership. Within the anti-trafficking community, there is broad consensus that regulations regarding human trafficking in supply chains are rarely enforced. Coordination between relevant stakeholders from the private sector, anti-trafficking organizations and governmental/law-enforcement agencies is therefore essential to maximizing the efficiency of the available resources. While growing attempts by anti-trafficking stakeholders to engage and partner with business are welcome and needed, given the important role the private sector plays in preventing and mitigating human trafficking, this should occur more strategically to maximize impact.

Finally, on the topic of gender, human rights and victim-centred approaches. Human trafficking is widely recognized a serious human rights issue and one that requires a human rights based approach to responses to trafficking. This would include that acknowledgement that states are responsible for protecting and promoting the rights of

victims of trafficking; and putting victim at the centre of states policies and laws to tackle trafficking in persons.

Civil society individuals and organizations supporting victims of human trafficking in affected communities are key in bringing local nuances into global spaces. These perspectives are key to addressing societal issues that drive the demands such as inequality, economic shocks, development and climate change. It also helps shedding light to patterns of discrimination, gender biases and power distribution that impeded access to justice, creates re-victimization and perpetuates impunity.