

**Statement by the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children at the Constructive Dialogue on trafficking in Persons**

**United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children**

**About ICMEC**

Over the last two decades, ICMEC has worked in more than 120 countries, empowering the global community with the tools, training and technology to create a safer world for children. We believe that **Every child deserves a safe childhood** and envision a world where children can grow up safe from exploitation, sexual abuse, or risk of going missing. Our work includes **Powering the global search for children who are missing, Disrupting the economics and mechanics of child sexual exploitation and Training partners on the front lines to prevent and respond to cases of missing children, child sexual abuse, and exploitation.**

**Topic of Submission**

**Technology Enabled and Technology Facilitated Trafficking of Children**

Technology as an enabler has provided a platform and innovative ways for children to fall victims of trafficking. Examples of platforms used are social media sites, dating sites, chatrooms, online gaming chats, false website and misleading mobile applications.

As a facilitator, technology has assisted in the trafficking process through online victim identification, selection and recruitment, coordination of the trafficking process through false documentation and presentation, speedy and hard to trace commercial transactions by use of cryptocurrency and dark web payments. It has also been used to collect and store information of potential victims for the purpose of blackmail and coercion.

Victim Identification and selection can be done through social media profiling, spamming and phishing emails or hacking. Once a victim is identified, they are forced to cooperate either through coercion, abduction, fraud, family facilitation, misusing of positions of authority or giving rewards.

**Challenges experienced.**

1) **Identification of Traffickers and Victims**

- Use of Pseudo names and Accounts by both victims and traffickers
- Encrypted communications
- Anonymity provided by Cryptocurrency.

2) **Law Enforcement Challenges**

- Data encryption
- Lack of technical equipment and software for online investigation due to high Cost
- Lack of specialized training for officers to carry out online investigations.
- Big data sets for analysis
- Dynamic and volatile nature of electronic /digital evidence

3) **Prosecution Challenges**

- Presentation of admissible electronic/digital evidence
- Availability of expert witnesses
- Jurisdiction Problem

4) **International Collaboration**

- Slow response to Mutual Legal Assistance Requests

5) **Cooperation by Private Sector**

- Legal barriers such as privacy rights of users
- Lack of harmonized data retention periods
- Quality and quantity of data handed over during investigation.

**Recommendations and Interventions**

1. Come up with strict and clear process for responding to Mutual Legal Assistance Requests in trafficking cases.
  - Harmonized template for information request
  - Maximum time needed to respond to a MLA Request
  - Possible repercussions for lack of response to MLAs
2. Come up with joint trainings for Law Enforcement Agencies to equip them with necessary and required skills to handle technology enabled trafficking (Standard operating procedures for law enforcement dealing with technology facilitated trafficking).
3. Embrace and leverage emerging technologies such as:
  - Artificial Intelligence for predictive analysis for mapping and identifying potential victim & Perpetrators.
  - Machine learning and blockchain for big data analysis.
4. Identify and address the push and pull factors that lead to children/ individuals becoming victims.
5. Have a robust monitoring and evaluation process that assess impact of awareness creation, not just number of persons trained but how it contributed to behavior change and reduction of vulnerability.
6. Invest in Public-Private partnership by addressing issues such as privacy rights vis a vis crime prevention, data retention and quality of data to be handed in during investigation.