

STOLEN DREAMS

ANTI-SLAVERY ORGANISATION

Constructive Dialogue on Trafficking in Persons: 1 July 2022

Criminalisation and Jurisdiction

3 minutes max.

Stolen Dreams: Ishaan Shah, Founder

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues,

Thank you for the floor and to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), for convening this important Dialogue.

My name is Ishaan Shah, I am 19-years-old and the Founder of Stolen Dreams, an international youth-led organization working to counter trafficking in persons. Additionally, I am a UN Women National Gender Youth Advocate and the UNODC Youth Focal Point for Stakeholder Engagement for the Review and Implementation of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

The evidence is clear. Despite the crucial need for protection, the criminalisation and punishment of survivors of trafficking in persons are often occurrences. Even children, who are severely impacted and vulnerable to trafficking in persons, by virtue of their age alone, are receiving weak protections from criminalization and punishment.

Thus we strongly urge States to commit to a human-rights-based criminal justice approach, going beyond the full and effective implementation of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UNTOC, as well as the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, to ensure that survivors are treated with dignity, and for their fundamental human rights to be protected.

This means survivors must not be criminalized nor threatened with detention, deportation, or other forms of punishment for crimes committed during their period of exploitation, such as breaches of laws, immigration procedures, possession and use of forged official documents, or drug offenses. Furthermore, survivors must be provided with the relevant humanitarian, legal and financial aid through established channels of assistance to support them during legal proceedings relating to securing justice.

To fulfill these aims and to realize the full potential of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, all stakeholders, including Member States, UN Agencies, and civil society must, in the strongest terms possible, to recognize the role of and to center the

meaningful participation of survivors, acknowledging the need to incorporate their perspective, expertise and experiences in all efforts to prevent, suppress and combat trafficking in persons.

Furthermore, being one of, if not the youngest person in the room, highlights the disconnect between youth and efforts to counter trafficking in persons. We strongly urge stakeholders to commit to promoting the full, effective, and meaningful engagement, participation and inclusion of youth, including youth with lived experiences, in all efforts and decision-making to counter trafficking in persons, as co-leaders, co-creators, and co-owners.

As youth, we hold a unique power to facilitate concrete, comprehensive and transformative progress, and we look forward to supporting all stakeholders, as experts in our own lived realities and as valued and equal partners at the decision making table, across all to truly counter trafficking in persons in all its forms.

Thank you.

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