Tuesday, 13 October 2020

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Agenda item 2(b): Trafficking in Persons Protocol

Distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen.

The Conference has in front of it the *Report of the Secretariat on the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to promote and support the implementation of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (CTOC/COP/2020/2).

Since October 2018, when the ninth session of the Conference was held, the number of States parties to the Trafficking in Persons Protocol has increased to 178; five countries, namely Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Comoros, Nepal and Palau, have newly acceded to the Trafficking in Persons Protocol.

As detailed in the report, since the last session of the Conference, UNODC has continued its technical cooperation and capacity building efforts at the global, regional and country level across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East.

UNODC implements a comprehensive strategy to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, promoting and supporting the implementation of the Protocol through

normative and policy work, knowledge development, inter-agency cooperation and coordination, as well as technical cooperation. Technical cooperation activities include providing legislative assistance to States, developing national strategies and coordination, research and data collection on trafficking in persons, strengthening States' criminal justice responses, promoting international cooperation, advancing crime prevention, increasing understanding of the crime and enhancing protection and support for victims.

Since October 2018 (until September 2020), UNODC, through its global programmes against Trafficking in Persons trained (including online training) more than six thousand criminal justice practitioners, government officials and civil society representatives. The global programmes undertook targeted technical cooperation activities in 42 countries, with a total of 63 countries represented in national or regional activities of UNODC focused either on trafficking in persons alone or on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. Among other activities, UNODC supported the drafting or amendment of legislation to prevent and counter trafficking in persons, in line with the trafficking Protocol, in Ethiopia and Pakistan, and further facilitated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation in data collection of cases of trafficking in persons among different stakeholders in Niger.

In 2019, UNODC launched a new initiative titled: *"Transforming Alerts into Criminal Justice Responses to Combat Trafficking in Persons within Migration Flows (TRACK4TIP)"* reaching eight countries across South America and the Caribbean to enhance the criminal justice response to human trafficking among flows of Venezuelan migrants in the region. Under this initiative UNODC aims at supporting new investigations and prosecutions of human trafficking cases as well

as strengthening victims identification, referral and support, through increased cooperation among countries in the wider South American region.

UNODC also continues to develop innovative training techniques, based on simulations, and used mock trials, and/or video-recordings, to train a broad range of practitioners, including labour inspectors, diplomats and social workers. Such efforts aim to improve detection of human trafficking, better protect and assist those who fall victim, increase international cooperation and end the impunity of traffickers. Among other activities, in 2018, UNODC, IBM and the Pasos Libres Foundation organized the first Hackathon* in Colombia with the title "BlueHack Pasos Libres contra la Trata de Personas". Similarly, in 2018 another Hackaton was organized in Brazil by UNODC with IBM National Secretariat of Justice and the Brazilian Association for the Defense of Women, of Childhood, and Youth (ASBRAD). Lastly, in 2020 a third event aimed at harnessing the power of technology to combat human trafficking was organized online by UNODC in collaboration with IBM, during which one hundred and sixty people from 13 countries worked against the clock on innovations that could identify trafficking patterns, locate hotspots and track criminal networks that exploit people of all ages and backgrounds.

Particular attention has been devoted to revising responses and strategies to address emerging concerns connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, including with a view to address the higher vulnerability to violence and exploitation of trafficking victims and the increased risk of victimization among vulnerable

---

* "Hackathon" refers to a time-bound competition-type event, which goal is the creation of a digital product, such as softwares, innovative computer programmes or an app, by the end of the event, as a solution to a particular issue (in this case, in relation to trafficking in persons).

populations. UNODC has in this regard developed dedicated policy guidance, including within relevant inter-agency mechanisms on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trafficking in persons. The policy brief, available in several languages, issued by UNODC in May 2020, discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures adopted to contain its spread have exacerbated and brought to the forefront the systemic and deeply entrenched economic and societal inequalities that are among the root causes of human trafficking. The brief further proposed a set of dedicated recommended actions to address those concerns.

UNODC further continues to collect and disseminate data on trends and patterns on trafficking in persons, through the biennial publication of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, one of its flagship publications, mandated by GA Resolution 64/293 (2010). The fourth edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons was launched in January 2019. It covered 142 countries and provided an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at global, regional and national levels. The 2018 Report witnessed that Member States are increasingly able to detect victims of crime and set up investigations, noting that further efforts are needed, including with the support by UNODC, in relation to adjudication of cases and conviction of perpetrators. In addition, the 2018 edition of the Report put the spotlight on human trafficking in armed conflict, showing that human trafficking in conflict situations is strongly characterized by extreme violence, brutality and coercion, as traffickers can operate with even greater impunity.

The fifth edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons will be launched in December 2020 and will include significant new features: next to the statistical analysis of the profiles of the victims and offenders detected between 2016 and 2019, to which the report owns much of its reputation, new sections will present

qualitative insights on emerging aspects of trafficking in persons, including an analysis of the victims' socio-economic vulnerabilities, traffickers organisations and methods, emerging risks connected to internet technologies, and the social dimension of child trafficking and forced labour.

Information is also collected on people suspected, prosecuted or convicted of trafficking in persons and related offences, making the UNODC dedicated database the largest repository of information on trafficking in persons worldwide. This year's edition will present information collected from more than 145 Member States, hence accounting for the largest coverage ever reported.

UNODC has continued to enable inter-agency efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic through its coordinating role of ICAT, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. With now 27 member entities represented, from across the UN system and regional organizations, ICAT is engaging governments, criminal justice practitioners, civil society and survivors in identifying responses to online sexual exploitation and trafficking in times of COVID, and continued to publish joint guidance, including on the application of the non-punishment principle for victims, which you will hear more about during the course of a dedicated COP side event on 14 October at 14:00.

The forthcoming ICAT meeting at the level of heads of agency, which UNODC will convene by the end of the year, will represent a primary opportunity to discuss strategic priorities needed to tackle the crime on the basis of an analysis of trends and gaps since the adoption of the anti-trafficking Protocol, 20 years ago, as well as roadmap for concerted UN support to states' efforts in eradicating the crime.

Following the adoption by the UN General Assembly (GA res. 73/195) of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which contains strong commitments by Member States regarding the ratification, accession and implementation of UNTOC and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, in objective 10 on: *"Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration"*, UNODC became an active member of the Executive Committee of the UN Network on Migration, established by the UN Secretary General to facilitate implementation of the Global Compact including its anti-human trafficking provisions..

The Conference is invited to discuss all issues relevant to the practical aspects of preventing and combating trafficking in persons, and how to improve cooperation to this end. The Secretariat remains grateful for all information that could be used to further enhance its technical assistance to States Parties.

Thank you for your attention.

***