

Tuesday, 13 October 2020

**Speaking notes for
Mrs. Amina Oufroukhi (Morocco)
Chair of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons**

Agenda item 2 (b): Trafficking in Persons Protocol

Mr. President,

Excellencies, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to brief the Conference on the work of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons since the eighth session of the Conference in 2018.

Over the past two years, the Working Group has met on two occasions, from 9 to 11 September 2019 and from 10 to 11 September 2020. The ninth meeting in 2019 was chaired by Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Fiji to the UN in Geneva and the UN in Vienna. The tenth and most recent meeting, which I have chaired, was held, as you are aware, under extraordinary circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its related health and safety concerns. For the first time in its

history, the meeting of the Working Group was in fact held in a hybrid/in-person format, with a large number of experts connected remotely. While some technical difficulties to attend the sessions were certainly experienced, overall, almost 500 registered delegates participated in the meeting, including multiple experts representing LDCs and countries in transition from conflict situations. Further, discussions were complemented by a significant number of written and online submissions received by the Secretariat during the meeting. Ultimately, despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of modern technologies has nevertheless provided for greater opportunities for active and meaningful engagement of national experts across the world.

As indicated in the reports of those meetings, which have been transmitted to the Conference, the Working Group considered the following topics at its last two meetings: (i) crime prevention measures in trafficking in persons; (ii) diplomatic and consular officials or liaison officers in diplomatic and consular missions and their roles in addressing human trafficking; (iii) guidance on the issue of appropriate criminal justice responses to victims who have been compelled to commit offences as a result of their being trafficked; and (iv) best practices in joint investigations and specialized prosecutions.

In 2019, the Working Group adopted **18 general recommendations, 8 recommendations focusing on crime prevention measures in trafficking in**

persons and 13 recommendations focusing on diplomatic and consular officials or liaison officers in diplomatic and consular missions and their roles in addressing trafficking in persons. In 2020, the Working Group was unable to complete line-by-line negotiations of the draft recommendations tabled at that meeting, and therefore decided to provide for post-meeting consultation. The comments resulting from this exercise were compiled by the Secretariat on my behalf, along with the draft recommendations, and made available to the Conference in the form of a Conference Room Paper, titled “*Status of consultations on the discussion points for future consideration stemming from the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons*”.

At the meeting of the Working Group in 2019, delegates shared their expertise outlining challenges and good practices in preventing trafficking in persons, including in supply chains, and discussed the impact of awareness-raising measures, data collection efforts, as well as evidence-based policies. Practitioners also discussed how to prevent domestic servitude in diplomatic households, including through the strengthening of policies at the national and international levels and the training of all diplomatic and consular personnel on trafficking in persons.

At the meeting of the Working Group in 2020, States discussed challenges and good practices in the application of the principle of non-punishment of

victims of trafficking at the national level, including at an early stage of the investigation of possible trafficking situations, as well as the importance of law enforcement applying victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches in the protection of victims. Practitioners also discussed the use of international cooperation tools such as joint investigations to ensure more effective cross-border information- and evidence-sharing on transnational cases of trafficking in persons, including related challenges and good practices. In addition, delegates highlighted the important role of specialized prosecution units to navigate the complexities of this crime, including with a view to ensuring human rights, trauma-informed, age- and gender-sensitive approaches when dealing with victims.

Allow me to thank all delegates who took part in the discussions and the Secretariat for its work. It was a pleasure to Chair the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons at its tenth meeting.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a productive and successful session.
