Statement

By

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran before

Working Group on Trafficking in Persons

(Vienna, 10-11 September 2020)

- On the second agenda:
  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

Madam Chair,

- I would like to begin by thanking the chair and the secretariat for their commendable work in preparing and organizing the tenth session of the Working Group on Trafficking in Person, which is proven to be a proper framework for strengthening international cooperation, addressing the challenges in implementing the relative provisions, and now protecting the victims.

- It is hard to sustain that even in the 21st century, there is still a worldwide struggle with combatting human trafficking, which is one of the most heinous and cruelest of organized crimes. In time, use of technological tools by criminals has not only diversified such crimes, leading to more sophisticated manifestations of criminal activities, but also increased the number of cases worldwide. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has only contributed to creating new opportunities for organized criminal groups. So, now more than ever, we need to step up our efforts to identify collective solutions for combatting trafficking in person.

- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes and its protocols are proven to be particularly conducive for creating a coherent cross-border regulatory environment. As one of the earliest signatories to UNTOC, the Islamic Republic of Iran has also taken necessary steps, in line with the provisions of the Convention and the protocols thereto.
• We acknowledge that the fight against all forms of human trafficking requires comprehensive frameworks. To this end, the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken necessary steps for the ratification of the Convention. UNTOC has been approved by our Parliament in 2018 and is now under consideration by the Expediency Council for its final approval.

• At the national level, several statutory regulations concerning trafficking in person are in place. More to the point, concerning the non-punishment principle, there are necessary legal tools for investigation and prosecution present within our legal system. The government has also approved a new Bill amending the Countering Human Trafficking Act of 2004, and submitted it to the parliament for adoption. This draft bill, while focusing on the definition of TIP as a serious crime, commission of human trafficking by organized groups and commission against minors and women as aggravating circumstances, particularly underlines that women and minors who have been compelled in the process, are exempt from any criminal liability in this regulation. Bearing in mind that trafficking in person is a transnational crime, there is no doubt that such harmony would eventually contribute to international cooperation on the issue. The specific character of each legal system should, of course, be kept in mind, while expecting such harmony.

Thank you, Madam Chair
On the third agenda:
**Best practices in joint investigations and specialized prosecutions**

Madam Chair,

- On this issue, I am glad to inform you that the **Commission on Countering Trafficking in Person** has been established by our ministry of interior, in order to effectively prevent trafficking in person and address evolving issues in this regard. This commission is comprised of experts from various domestic departments. Developing and refining policies, strategies and programmes, while monitoring any behaviour relating to human trafficking, and submitting relative reports to the executive officials on a regular basis are amongst mandates of this commission. This establishment could very well demonstrate our efforts and also prioritize new rising issues, while helping us with our other executive measures in fight against trafficking in person; namely improving control over borders, establishing suitable camps and shelters for the victims and of course, fostering any cooperation in this matter, including joint investigation.

- So, with regard to the crucial role of international and regional cooperation in fighting against any organized crime, Islamic Republic of Iran has been considering working alongside with the neighbouring states, in partnership with the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, also known as GLO.ACT, which encourages joint investigations.

- However, despite such meaningful efforts in joining our forces, unilateral coercive measures imposed by a certain state, contrary to the fundamental principles of international law have impaired allocation of sufficient resources to our fight against crime and have further hindered cooperation of Member States on criminal matters.

- Furthermore, certain countries have been labelling other states, accusing them of having weak conducts in combatting TIP. Such unacceptable behaviour that is mostly derived from political motives and disagreements among states could gravely discourage international cooperation in implementing the provisions of the Convention and the protocols thereto.
Nevertheless, the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its commitment to the fight against TIP and considers the role of the United Nations bodies, specifically UNODC, determining in facilitating international cooperation and providing tailor-made, accessible and effective technical assistance, which can play a crucial role in the fight against trafficking in person.

Thank you, Madam Chair.