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Best practices in joint investigations and specialized prosecutions

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Background paper prepared by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The present background paper was prepared by the Secretariat to facilitate the discussions of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons at its twelfth meeting. The paper supplements the background paper prepared for the tenth meeting of the Working Group, held on 10 and 11 September 2020 ([CTOC/COP/WG.4/2020/3](#)), and covers developments, challenges and best practices that have emerged in the past two years in the areas of joint investigations and specialized prosecutions, including in the light of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the related restrictions. The paper also includes a list of key resources published since the previous discussion of the topic by the Working Group, in September 2020.

II. Issues for discussion

2. Building upon previous discussions on the topic of joint investigations and specialized prosecutions, delegations may wish to consider the responses of their States to the following questions in preparing for the Working Group's deliberations:

(a) Have States parties adopted specific legislation enabling the establishment of joint investigations for cross-border trafficking in persons cases?

(b) How have States parties responded to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictions on cross-border cooperation, with a particular focus on joint investigations and specialized prosecutions?

(i) Has the pandemic had an impact on the ability of States parties to conduct joint investigations and specialized prosecutions?

(ii) Have States parties amended their domestic law or adopted procedural measures to facilitate cross-border cooperation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

* CTOC/COP/WG.4/2022/1.



(iii) Have States parties developed operational guidelines or protocols for practitioners to facilitate the conduct of joint investigations during the health crisis?

(iv) Have States parties adopted measures to facilitate the digitalization of justice systems? Has funding been allocated to promote e-justice mechanisms?

(c) Have States parties recently conducted any particularly successful joint investigations that have resulted in the disruption of trafficking networks and the rescue of victims? If so, were there any innovative aspects? What challenges were experienced?

(d) Do States parties allow for multidisciplinary teams to participate in joint investigations, and, if so, what are the backgrounds of the members of such teams?

(e) Have States parties recently established prosecutorial units specializing in trafficking in persons? Are those units composed of multidisciplinary teams? Are the units centralized or distributed across the State's territory?

(f) Have States parties cooperated in the creation of new regional or international networks of investigators and prosecutors? How did the activities of such networks adapt to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

(g) Have States parties provided specialized training to prosecutors on emerging trafficking issues, as well as on human rights-based, victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches, including on the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking for acts committed as a direct result of their trafficking?

(h) Can States parties provide examples of cases in which specialized prosecutors successfully participated in joint investigations?

3. In furthering discussions on best practices in joint investigations and specialized prosecutions, the Working Group may wish to encourage States parties to take the following actions, among others:

(a) Strengthen coordinated national and international criminal justice responses for the investigation and prosecution of domestic and cross-border cases, including trafficking cases, by promoting the use of joint investigations, special investigative techniques and specialized prosecutions;

(b) Consider developing national legal frameworks and/or adopting bilateral or multilateral agreements so as to allow for the establishment of joint investigations of cross-border cases, in particular trafficking in persons cases, including those involving more than two countries;

(c) Consider developing protocols and operational guidelines in order to support practitioners in the establishment of joint investigations based on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and in other emergency contexts;

(d) Strengthen e-justice mechanisms, including by promoting the use of electronic judicial platforms, identification and authentication systems for relevant parties, electronic judicial files, digital case management and videoconferencing tools for hearings and trials, bearing in mind the importance of access to technology by all actors involved in the criminal justice process, as well as cybersafety and cybersecurity and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(e) Consider establishing specialized multidisciplinary units of prosecutors for trafficking in persons cases, composed of teams with different backgrounds and expertise, for example, in related financial crimes (e.g. money-laundering);

(f) Ensure the development of and regular updates to training curricula for prosecutors, investigators and judges, including on the use of e-justice mechanisms in trafficking in persons cases, based on age- and gender-sensitive, trauma-informed approaches to the treatment of victims, as well as on emerging forms of trafficking in persons;

(g) Seek the technical and operational support of existing international and regional organizations specialized in cross-border judicial cooperation to facilitate joint investigations, including by making use of existing technical tools and guidance materials;

(h) Foster information exchange between criminal justice actors, including by making wide use of existing formal and informal coordination and cooperation networks.

III. Background

4. Trafficking in persons is a complex crime to investigate and prosecute. Perpetrators of trafficking in persons continuously adapt their operational models to the evolving circumstances to increase their profits, while reducing the risk of being detected and being held accountable for their crimes. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020* indicates that more than half of the victims of trafficking were detected within national borders. Cross-border trafficking flows, however, remain a significant phenomenon, with most flows around the world occurring within the same subregion or region.¹

5. Effective and timely international cooperation is thus essential to dismantling trafficking networks that operate in different countries. It is also essential to rescuing victims (survivors) and bringing them to safety. Joint investigations among countries where international criminal networks engaged in trafficking in persons operate are today widely recognized as successful means of cooperation, which has helped bring about significant results in the fight against this crime in the past decades. Several models for and approaches to joint investigations have emerged out of States' practice. The most common ones include parallel investigations undertaken simultaneously in relevant countries and the creation of joint investigative bodies or ad hoc joint investigation teams among the different countries involved.²

6. Owing to the complexities associated with prosecuting cases of trafficking in persons, including in the light of the increased use by traffickers of modern technologies to recruit and exploit victims anonymously, another effective practice that has emerged in past years in order to facilitate prosecutions and secure convictions in cases of trafficking is the deployment of specialized prosecutors within existing criminal justice structures and/or the establishment of national prosecutorial units specialized in this subject matter. Specialized prosecutors have substantive knowledge of the main elements, indicators and patterns of trafficking in persons offences, enabling them to navigate the complexities arising throughout the process while building stronger cases before the courts and avoiding the revictimization and traumatization of victims.

7. At its tenth meeting, in 2020, the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons discussed the issue of joint investigations and specialized prosecutions and shared national practices. Since that meeting, the ongoing global emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to have an impact on the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases across the globe, including on cross-border joint investigations and the work of specialized prosecutors.

8. Despite the numerous restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the disease, Member States have continued to undertake joint investigations in several parts of the world; thus, this practice has gained further traction as an effective operational tool for dismantling criminal trafficking rings and thereby rescuing victims. Similarly, specialized prosecutors in different countries have continued to contribute to holding perpetrators accountable by providing justice to victims in new and innovative ways.

¹ United Nations publication, 2020, pp. 58–59.

² For an account of types of joint investigations, legal frameworks, advantages and challenges, see [CTOC/COP/WG.4/2020/3](#). See also [CTOC/COP/WG.3/2020/2](#).

However, those joint investigations and prosecutions have encountered several obstacles in their undertaking.

9. The sections that follow will thus explore specific challenges that have hampered joint investigations and specialized prosecutions of trafficking cases during the COVID-19 pandemic, while providing examples of promising practices that have emerged since 2020, including in response to the health crisis and the related restrictions.

Challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic in joint investigations and specialized prosecutions

10. As mentioned above, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on the investigation and prosecution of trafficking in persons cases globally. In 2021, UNODC published a study on the effects that the health crisis had, among others, on criminal justice responses to trafficking in persons. It is likely that those effects also had an impact on the ability of States to conduct joint investigations, as well as on the work of specialized prosecutors.³

11. The study revealed, among other findings, that law enforcement capacities in several countries had been diverted to support national COVID-19 responses. Police and investigation units specialized in anti-trafficking responses were reassigned from their regular duties to support the enforcement of various measures imposed to curb the spread of the virus.⁴

12. Overall, evidence suggested that especially in the early stage of the pandemic, criminal justice systems experienced delays in or even suspensions of work, which affected the ability of many States to carry out investigations of and secure convictions for trafficking cases. In some regions, law enforcement and prosecutorial capacities were reduced because staff were infected with COVID-19 or were in isolation.⁵

13. In some countries, funding for the criminal justice system was diverted towards health-related expenditures. The reduced funding resulted in, among other things, an inability to purchase technical equipment for criminal justice officers to conduct work remotely, including laptops and video cameras, or to hire information technology experts to set up such equipment and train law enforcement officers, prosecutors and the judiciary in its use.⁶

14. Other operational challenges resulting from pandemic-related restrictions, which have hampered the way in which joint investigation teams have worked during the pandemic, included the postponement of joint activities, the inability of members of joint investigation teams to travel and conduct in-person meetings, delayed negotiations on the establishment of new joint investigation teams, and challenges related to the legal validity of electronic copies of documents, such as joint investigation team agreements, in lieu of the original signed paper versions.⁷

15. Furthermore, in the early phases of the pandemic, prosecutors experienced limitations on access to hard copy case files and other court documents owing to the strict restrictions on movement.⁸ Moreover, in some countries, delayed judicial

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons and Responses to the Challenges: A Global Study of Emerging Evidence* (2021).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁷ See European Judicial Network, "COVID-19 and judicial cooperation in criminal matters", 21 January 2022 (last update). See also European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), *The Impact of COVID-19 on Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters: Analysis of Eurojust Casework* (May 2021).

⁸ United States, Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report* (June 2021), p. 451.

proceedings reportedly resulted in the prosecution of trafficking cases under less serious offences.⁹

16. In addition, specialized anti-trafficking training activities for law enforcement or judicial officers in some countries were suspended as a result of pandemic-related restrictions on physical gatherings.¹⁰

17. In 2021, the Secretariat developed a background paper to inform the discussions of the Working Group on International Cooperation on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international cooperation in criminal matters (CTOC/COP/WG.3/2021/2). Although it is not specifically focused on trafficking in persons cases, that resource provides a useful account of major difficulties caused by the pandemic in cross-border cooperation, including joint investigations, as well as emerging practices and trends in response to those challenges.

IV. Recent promising practices in joint investigations and specialized prosecutions of trafficking in persons cases

A. Developments and practices that have emerged since 2020 in joint investigations, including during the COVID-19 pandemic

18. Since 2020, the use of joint investigations to dismantle human trafficking networks has been re-emphasized in regional and national strategic frameworks and action plans aimed at combating the crime.¹¹ In 2021, for example, the European Union adopted its Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2025, in which the importance of joint investigations as a tool for effective cross-border cooperation was recognized. In the Strategy, States members of the European Union were invited to make full use of existing instruments for operational cooperation, such as joint investigation teams, with support from the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), and to pursue operational cooperation in the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats.

19. The support of regional and international organizations specialized in cross-border law enforcement and judicial cooperation, including joint investigations, has continued to be essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNODC, the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), Europol, the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), among other stakeholders, provided technical and operational support to States towards the initiation of joint investigations or the continuation of those already in place.

20. In 2020, Eurojust reported providing support to 11 newly established joint investigation teams on trafficking in persons cases on the European continent.¹² More recently, in September 2021, a Eurojust-supported joint investigation between two European countries led to the dismantling of a trafficking network that recruited vulnerable women online and forced them into domestic servitude. The operation led to the rescue of 90 victims.¹³

21. Several large-scale joint operations have also been supported by INTERPOL, in cooperation with UNODC and other international and regional organizations, in the past two years. A recent example is Operation Liberterra, conducted in July 2021, which involved 47 countries and led to the arrest of 286 suspects worldwide, as well

⁹ Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 407.

¹¹ See, for example, United States, *The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking* (Washington, D.C., White House, 2021), p. 55.

¹² Eurojust, *Annual Report 2020* (The Hague, 2021), p. 10.

¹³ Eurojust, “Nearly 90 victims saved from severe labour exploitation in Italy”, 4 September 2021.

as the rescue of 430 victims of trafficking. Many of the victims were provided protection and were referred to medical, psychological and housing services.¹⁴

22. In November and December 2020, the INTERPOL-led Operation Turquesa II, supported by UNODC through its Transforming Alerts into Criminal Justice Responses to Combat Trafficking in Persons within Migration Flows (TRACK4TIP) initiative,¹⁵ brought together 32 countries across four continents and resulted in, among other things, the rescue of some 100 potential victims of trafficking in persons within migration flows. Key to the success of that joint operation was effective multi-agency cooperation among all the authorities involved.¹⁶

23. In November and December 2021, the INTERPOL-led Operation Turquesa III, supported by UNODC, the International Organization for Migration and Europol and involving 34 countries, led to the rescue of 127 victims of trafficking in persons for forced labour and sexual exploitation. Among them, a large number of children trafficked predominantly for sexual exploitation were rescued and provided with necessary assistance.¹⁷

24. The support offered by international and regional organizations since 2020 has been focused on mitigating some of the difficulties faced by States in conducting joint investigations during the pandemic. Eurojust, for example, amended its funding programme for joint investigation teams and provided members of such teams with secure communication platforms to conduct online meetings.¹⁸ In addition, Eurojust continued its financial and operational support covering the entire life cycle of joint investigations during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁹

25. Because transnational cases of trafficking in persons involve multiple jurisdictions, another practice recently highlighted as promising is the engagement of more than two countries in joint investigations of trafficking cases. For example, Eurojust reported an increase in the number of joint investigation teams involving third countries in recent years, which have brought about successful results.²⁰ In that context, the use of existing networks to establish contacts for the creation of joint investigation teams at an early stage, as well as maintaining regular and efficient communication channels with all parties involved, was identified as a good practice.²¹

26. The establishment of liaison magistrates in several countries has also been increasingly highlighted as an effective tool for facilitating joint international investigations and prosecutions, including for cross-regional cases. Liaison magistrates are trained prosecutors from one country who are deployed in another country to act as an interface between the national central authorities of the deploying country and the host country. Liaison magistrates play a key role in determining whether international judicial cooperation, including joint investigations, should be initiated. They can easily facilitate the establishment of such cooperation by providing

¹⁴ INTERPOL, “286 arrested in global human trafficking and migrant smuggling operation”, 26 July 2021.

¹⁵ The TRACK4TIP initiative is a three-year (2019–2022) initiative of UNODC. The project is aimed at enhancing the regional criminal justice response to human trafficking among migration flows within the beneficiary countries, following a victim-centred and multidisciplinary approach and working at the regional and local levels to identify, prevent and prosecute cases. It spans eight countries in South America and the Caribbean, with actions at the national and regional levels in Aruba, Brazil, Colombia, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago. For more information, see UNODC, Liaison and Partnership Office in Brazil, “TRACK4TIP programme: an anti-trafficking initiative”. Available at www.unodc.org/.

¹⁶ INTERPOL, “INTERPOL operation targets migrant smuggling and human trafficking”, 11 December 2020.

¹⁷ INTERPOL, “Americas: 216 arrests in INTERPOL-led operation against migrant smuggling and human trafficking”, 10 December 2021.

¹⁸ Eurojust, *Annual Report 2020*, p. 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²¹ See Eurojust, *Third JIT Evaluation Report: Evaluations Received between November 2017 and November 2019* (March 2020), p. 4.

legal advice and coordination services and following up with the relevant authorities in the deploying country.²²

27. Through the joint PROMIS (Protection of migrants: justice, human rights and migrant smuggling) project,²³ UNODC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recently supported the deployment of prosecutors from African countries to Europe through the creation of liaison magistrates, with a view to fostering judicial cooperation in, among others, cases relating to trafficking in persons.²⁴

28. In addition, the use of multi-agency teams in joint investigations and operations, including not only police forces but also prosecutors or judges (where applicable), international or regional law enforcement organizations and non-governmental organizations, continues to be highlighted as a best practice. In a UNODC-led regional expert group meeting on South-Eastern Europe held in June 2021, experts acknowledged that the joint operations that had proved most successful in disrupting trafficking networks were those in which different organizations and institutions had acted together, each providing its own expertise and interventions.

29. The digitalization of international cooperation, including joint investigations, brought to the forefront by the COVID-19 pandemic, has emerged as an urgent need in the past two years. To this end, several initiatives have been undertaken to improve information exchange and evidence-sharing among investigators through electronic means. A recent positive example was the proposal by the European Commission in 2020 to establish a collaboration platform for joint investigation teams as part of its new Digital Criminal Justice initiative.²⁵

30. Faced with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries and judicial cooperation organizations also developed special guidelines and protocols²⁶ in order to facilitate the work of criminal justice practitioners during the lockdowns, including by using new technologies, such as secure videoconferencing systems.²⁷

B. Developments and practices that have emerged since 2020 in specialized prosecutions of trafficking in persons cases

31. As noted above, the COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictions made it necessary to find innovative solutions in prosecutions of trafficking in persons cases, including those undertaken by specialized prosecutors, in the past two years.

32. While prosecution units in many countries suspended investigations and criminal proceedings relating to trafficking cases at first, they later adapted their efforts in order to continue their work.²⁸ In particular, many countries made efforts to digitalize justice mechanisms, including court proceedings, and several jurisdictions reported that they had equipped prosecutors with technical tools and software to

²² See, for example, UNODC, “Deploying African liaison magistrates to fight transnational organized crime: building on the Nigerian experience”, 27 October 2020.

²³ To learn more about the PROMIS project, see UNODC, West and Central Africa, “Discover the PROMIS* champions working to protect and promote the human rights of migrants during COVID-19”, 2 November 2020.

²⁴ For more information, see UNODC, West and Central Africa, “UNODC deploys a liaison Magistrate from Niger to Italy to strengthen judicial cooperation on cases related to trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants”, 1 November 2021.

²⁵ Eurojust, *Annual Report 2020*, pp.10–11.

²⁶ See, for example, Eurojust, “Guidelines on operational support during the COVID-19 pandemic” (2020).

²⁷ For more information, see Council of the European Union, “EJN videoconference on COVID-19 measures”, document No. 7923/20.

²⁸ United States, Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, p. 222.

continue to conduct witness interviews and hearings remotely.²⁹ As reported by UNODC, e-justice platforms were used by judicial actors in several countries to submit documents, motions and other requests online.³⁰

33. In addition, information-sharing activities and informal or formal coordination among specialized prosecutors were carried out through the use of information and communications technologies. In South America, for example, the Ibero-American Network of Specialized Prosecutors against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, established by UNODC, made wide use of available technologies to coordinate with investigation teams during the pandemic. In particular, specialized prosecutors in the Network held all of their meetings online, which offered the advantage of faster communication and more rapid information exchange on trafficking in persons cases.³¹

34. Another good practice reported during the lockdowns is the creation of chats on instant messaging platforms with a view to facilitating communication between law enforcement and prosecutors on trafficking in persons cases. In one specific instance, a country's public prosecutor on trafficking in persons, together with a legal expert, used such a forum to provide mentorship and technical assistance in trafficking cases to forum participants across the country.³²

35. Moreover, the provision of specialized training to prosecutors continues to be essential to a successful criminal justice response to trafficking in persons. Specialized prosecutors are better equipped to deal with victims of trafficking in persons when they receive appropriate training on victim-centred, human rights-based, gender- and age-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, victims of trafficking may have suffered different types of exploitation, including online sexual exploitation, which, combined with long periods of isolation, may have led them to experience specific forms of trauma. It is important for specialized prosecutors to be aware of and to know how to take into account such trauma when interacting with victims.

36. Throughout 2021, UNODC continued to provide training for prosecutors in South-East Asia through its European Union-funded Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants – Asia and the Middle East project. On those occasions, it became clear that more knowledge and expertise is needed on evidential issues in relation to victims acting as witnesses and the non-punishment of victims of trafficking for illegal conduct that they committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked. In many legal contexts, applying this principle properly remains complex.

37. With traffickers quickly adapting their *modi operandi* during the COVID-19 pandemic and moving much of their illicit activities online, prosecutors also increasingly faced the need to obtain and process digital evidence and online data. They also required specialized training, including with regard to the admissibility of digital evidence in court proceedings.

38. Similarly, the need to train specialized prosecutors regularly in the use of information and communications technologies in order to conduct video trials and other online proceedings has become apparent in the past two years. While e-justice mechanisms were initially established or strengthened as an immediate response to the pandemic, they will most likely be maintained wherever possible.³³

²⁹ UNODC, *The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons and Responses to the Challenges*, p. 63. See also, as an example, United States, Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, p. 248.

³⁰ UNODC, *The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons and Responses to the Challenges*, p. 63.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³² United States, Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, p. 14.

³³ UNODC, *The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons and Responses to the Challenges*, pp. 63–64.

39. Lastly, in the past two years the provision by international and regional organizations of technical cooperation and capacity development has also been considered key to supporting the establishment of prosecution units and tribunals specialized in trafficking in persons. For example, UNODC has recently provided support and training for the establishment in Bangladesh of seven specialized anti-human trafficking tribunals, located in different parts of the country (with two more planned to be opened soon). Dedicated judges and prosecutors have been assigned to those courts with the goal of ensuring the expeditious dispensation of justice in trafficking in persons cases in order to tackle the existing backlog.

V. Issues arising from the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons

40. At its tenth meeting, in September 2020, the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons discussed best practices in joint investigations and specialized prosecutions, guided by a background paper prepared by the Secretariat (CTOC/COP/WG.4/2020/3). The panel presentations and the ensuing discussion fleshed out promising practices and successful examples, as well as challenges, related to cross-border cooperation in criminal matters to counter trafficking in persons (see CTOC/COP/WG.4/2020/4). Some of the dominant themes from the discussion and the post-meeting comments received from delegations, as captured in conference room paper CTOC/COP/2020/CRP.2, are as follows:

(a) The need to apply a victim-centred and human rights-based approach to protecting identified victims when undertaking joint investigations and specialized prosecutions;

(b) The need to reduce the reliance and dependency of investigations on the testimony of victims and instead focus on building a case through the elements surrounding the victim;

(c) The importance of establishing specialized prosecution units or teams that are multi-jurisdictional and multidisciplinary in order to address the multifaceted nature of the crime of trafficking in persons;

(d) The need to foster coordinated cross-border information exchange between authorities in different jurisdictions;

(e) The need to provide specialized training for criminal justice and other relevant actors, including on human rights-based, age- and gender-sensitive, victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches, as well as on organized crime, international cooperation and victim vulnerabilities;

(f) The need to make use of dedicated networks to facilitate international cooperation in the fight against trafficking in persons, including to identify and address gaps in legislative frameworks;

(g) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on investigations and cross-border prosecutions, including the delay of court trials and the engagement of victims during the process.

41. While there was extensive discussion on best practices in joint investigations and specialized prosecutions, the Working Group was unable to complete line-by-line negotiations of the draft recommendations proposed during the meeting (see CTOC/COP/2020/CRP.2).

VI. Key tools and recommended resources

Global Trafficking in Persons Report 2020

42. The *Global Trafficking in Persons Report 2020*, which is part of a series of reports published by UNODC every two years, explores the principle of

non-punishment of victims of trafficking and presents recommendations for the effective implementation of that principle and for the protection of victims of trafficking in persons.

The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons and Responses to the Challenges: A Global Study of Emerging Evidence

43. This recent study by UNODC illustrates the devastating impact of COVID-19 on victims and survivors of human trafficking and highlights the increased targeting and exploitation of children. In particular, the report explores the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on: (a) the scale and characteristics of trafficking in persons; (b) victims of trafficking; and (c) front-line organizations (law enforcement agencies, prosecution services, the judiciary, and protection and reintegration services provided by non-governmental organizations). The report also examines the different initiatives developed in response to the challenges created by COVID-19 and identifies promising practices.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters: Analysis of Eurojust Casework

44. Prepared by Eurojust, this report identifies the specific difficulties that resulted from the pandemic in the application of the most commonly used instruments of judicial cooperation, including joint investigation teams. The report also addresses the role of Eurojust in relation to those issues and provides summaries of best practices for practitioners and policymakers.

Toolkit to Combat Trafficking in Persons

45. The UNODC *Toolkit to Combat Trafficking in Persons* seeks to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information among policymakers, law enforcement personnel, judges, prosecutors, victim service providers and members of civil society. Specifically, the *Toolkit* is intended to provide guidance, showcase promising practices and recommend resources in thematic areas. Chapter V of the *Toolkit* addresses law enforcement and prosecution, including joint investigations, and provides reference tools, sets of checklists, indicators and training material related to core considerations in law enforcement responses to trafficking in persons. Chapter IV deals with the international mechanisms for criminal justice cooperation, including law enforcement cooperation.

The Status and Role of Prosecutors: A United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and International Association of Prosecutors Guide

46. *The Status and Role of Prosecutors: A United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and International Association of Prosecutors Guide* is a joint publication of UNODC and the International Association of Prosecutors which is aimed at assisting Member States in their review or development of rules for the prosecution service, in accordance with international standards and norms. It seeks to illustrate those standards and norms and expose readers to different noteworthy practices, including specialization of knowledge.

ASEAN Handbook on International Legal Cooperation in Trafficking in Persons Cases

47. The *ASEAN Handbook on International Legal Cooperation in Trafficking in Persons Cases*, a joint publication of UNODC, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Government of Australia, provides guidance regarding measures for international legal cooperation, with a focus on States members of ASEAN. Various types of international cooperation are outlined, including informal police-to-police cooperation and more specific, formal types of cooperation. The publication is designed as a practical tool to equip criminal justice practitioners, primarily law enforcement officers, prosecutors, central authority lawyers and others

within the ASEAN region, to respond to the challenges posed by trafficking by adequately investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases and executing international assistance requests.

Guidelines on the Network of Joint Investigation Teams

48. This tool, prepared by Eurojust, provides guidance on the composition and activities of the Network of National Experts on Joint Investigation Teams and its cooperation with external partners and non-European Union States, and elaborates further on the principles set out in Council of the European Union document 11037/05, entitled “Joint investigation teams: proposal for designation of national experts”.

Joint Investigation Teams: Practical Guide

49. The publication entitled *Joint Investigation Teams: Practical Guide* provides information, guidance and advice on the formation of joint investigation teams by European practitioners. The publication was developed and launched in 2017 by the Network of National Experts on Joint Investigation Teams, in cooperation with Eurojust, Europol and the European Anti-Fraud Office, and builds upon a previous manual on the basis of practical experience acquired in States members of the European Union. It also incorporates a model agreement on joint investigation teams for use by States.
