



WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS 30 JULY

#EndHumanTrafficking

The **World Day Against Trafficking in Persons** was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013 to raise awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights. **This year's theme focuses on the role of technology as a tool that can both enable and impede human trafficking.**

With the global expansion in the use of technology - **intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift of our everyday life to online platforms** -- the crime of human trafficking has conquered cyber space. The internet and digital platforms offer traffickers numerous tools to recruit, exploit, and control victims; organize their transport and accommodation; advertise victims and reach out to potential clients; communicate among perpetrators; and hide criminal proceeds - and all that with greater speed, cost-effectiveness and anonymity.

Moreover, **technology allows these criminals to operate internationally across jurisdictions and evade detection** with greater ease. Traffickers use social media to identify, groom and recruit victims, including children; e-mails and messaging services are used for the moral coercion of the victims; and **online platforms allow traffickers to widely advertise services provided by victims**, including child photographic material.

Crisis situations can also intensify this problem. Criminals profit from the chaos, desperation, and separation of people - particularly women and children - from support systems and family members. For people on the move, online resources can become a trap, especially when it comes to phony travel arrangements and fake job offers targeting vulnerable groups.

However, **in the use of technology also lies great opportunity.** Future success in eradicating human trafficking will depend on how law enforcement, the criminal justice systems and others can leverage technology in their responses, including by aiding investigations to shed light on the modus operandi of trafficking networks; enhancing prosecutions through digital evidence to alleviate the situation of victims in criminal proceedings; and providing support services to survivors. **Prevention and awareness-raising activities on the safe use of the internet and social media could help mitigate the risk of people falling victim of trafficking online.** Cooperation with the private sector is important to harness innovation and expertise for the development of sustainable technology-based solutions to support prevention and combatting of human trafficking.

In October 2021, **the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons** considered all of the above issues and adopted the following recommendations to all countries that have ratified the **UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol**. On this World Day, in considering the use and abuse of technology in relation to human trafficking, countries globally might consider the following actions.

States can...

- Provide for the **effective investigation and prosecution** of technology-facilitated trafficking in persons, including by being flexible enough to keep pace with technological developments and allowing for the effective **use of electronic evidence**.
- Enhance operational responses to technology-facilitated trafficking in persons, especially women and children, including by:
 - (a) Strengthening the **expertise and capacity of law enforcement agencies** to use new technological tools to conduct efficient and lawful investigations and operations on digital devices and in the cyberspace, including through the **use of digital forensic tools and operations on the dark web**;
 - (b) Establishing or developing specialized law enforcement functions on cyber-enabled crime, including related trafficking in persons, and/or enhancing **cooperation between existing cyber and anti-trafficking functions**;
 - (c) Undertaking **financial investigations** of all trafficking cases, including **online trafficking cases**, to confiscate any proceeds of crime and property in a manner consistent with the Convention, and consider utilizing these to support victims of trafficking for their recovery;
 - (d) Providing for **appropriate protection and assistance schemes** for victims of trafficking in persons that take into account age, gender and the special needs of victims, as well as the harm caused by crime, including trauma, informed by persons who are or have been victims of trafficking in persons.
- Ensure that **access and use of technology** by law enforcement authorities is **consistent with domestic law and relevant and applicable international human rights obligations**.
- **Improve safety standards in the cyberspace**, in the digital services and products that children may use, as well as provide preventative age-appropriate education for children, youth and parents, and seek **cooperation with Internet service providers** and other relevant technology partners to **lower the risks of recruitment and exploitation of children through the Internet**, and to encourage the companies to design and monitor their products with a view to improving safety and privacy online.
- Enhance **sub-regional, regional and international cooperation** to develop policies, share intelligence and conduct joint and parallel investigations to prevent and counter trafficking in persons enabled by information and communications technology, in accordance with their domestic law.
- Encourage, facilitate and expand effective partnerships and **cooperation between relevant stakeholders from the public sector, civil society and the private sector, especially technology companies**, to harness innovation, strengthen cooperation, to enhance the use of technology opportunities in preventing and combatting trafficking in persons.
 - Encourage technology companies and other service providers to:
 - (a) Develop tools to **better detect** and more efficiently analyse data concerning **trafficking in persons activities online**, including child trafficking;
 - (b) **Report suspected incidents** of trafficking in persons online to law enforcement in compliance with human rights and the right to privacy in international law and to enable law enforcement agencies, acting with appropriate legal authority, to access the data; and
 - (c) **Ensure that material** used for online recruitment and exploitation of trafficked persons, including online sexual exploitation, **is removed** in a timely and accurate manner **from online platforms** to avoid revictimization and continuing exploitation.
- **Support UNODC's efforts** to undertake data collection and analysis, capacity-building as well as dissemination of promising practices related to the use of modern technologies to address trafficking in persons.