



EUROPEAN UNION

EU Statement on

Agenda item 2: Emerging knowledge and practice regarding the prevention of and response to corruption in the context of trafficking in persons

Thirteen session of the UNTOC Working Group on Trafficking in Persons

Madam Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

This discussion on preventing and countering corruption in the context of trafficking in persons is of utmost relevance.

The European Union is placing increasing attention on the linkages between trafficking in human beings and other crime areas, such as migrant smuggling, drug trafficking and, indeed, corruption.

Corruption has a two-fold relevance when it comes to trafficking in human beings:

- It enables the commission of the crime, by diverting the attention of the competent authorities from the exploitation, which is often already hidden. Some examples are sexual exploitation happening in private accommodation, or labour exploitation happening in remote locations or in private establishments.
- It also perpetuates impunity, by weakening law enforcement and judicial response efforts, and ensuring that trafficking in human beings remains a crime with high profit and low or no cost.

This is particularly worrying due to the challenges existing at the national level, both in the EU and worldwide, to successfully investigate, prosecute and convict traffickers and corrupt criminals.

We are eager to listen to the experience of the panellists and of UN Member States in this area.

We are glad that a key partner, such as UNODC, is taking this issue seriously and we look forward to cooperating with them and other international partners on future initiatives in this field.

We welcome this session, which comes just a few days before the 2nd EU-UNODC Dialogue on Corruption, where we will further discuss the links between corruption and the areas covered by the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocols, including trafficking in persons.

Madam Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

2023 is a pivotal year for the European Union's fight against corruption.

In May this year, the European Commission approved an anticorruption package with a range of different measures to tackle corruption, wherever this may occur.

These measures include a proposal for a new Directive on combating corruption, which will modernise the existing EU anti-corruption legal framework. It includes new and strengthened preventive measures, as well as rules for the criminalisation of corruption offences, while harmonising penalties across the EU.

Further actions include a proposal to create a regime of external sanctions against serious acts of corruption affecting the interests of the Union, and the establishment of the EU network against corruption, including law enforcement agents, public agencies, as well as practitioners, civil society and other stakeholders.

We are happy to report that the EU network against corruption was officially established on 20 September 2023 and, among other tasks, it will support the EU in performing a corruption-risk mapping, which will then inform the future EU anticorruption strategy.

These recent EU initiatives on corruption will have a beneficial spill-over impact on all criminal areas involving corruption, including the trafficking in human beings.

As you know, this comes at the same time as we are revising the EU Anti-trafficking Directive with a view to strengthening our legal framework in order to better tackle recent challenges and emerging trends.

With the joint application of these complementary improved legal frameworks, the EU and its Member States will be better equipped to prevent and combat both crimes, and to have improved tools to break the criminal model of groups that engage in both crimes.

Thank you.