



European Union
Draft EU Statement on

**Agenda item 3: Measures to strengthen procurement policies at the national,
regional and international levels**

**Eleventh session of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons
Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention
against Transnational Organised Crime**

Vienna, 12-13 October 2021

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland†, Norway†, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia.

Trafficking in human beings is a serious crime and remains a threat to societies in the European Union and beyond. The majority of the victims are women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation, and almost every fourth victim of trafficking in the EU is a child. Half of the victims are EU citizens, many trafficked within their own States.

Labour exploitation concerns 15% of all victims of trafficking within the European Union, with an increasing number of victims remaining undetected.

In the European Union, criminal revenues of trafficking for sexual exploitation were estimated at about EUR 14 billion in one single year, which makes it the fourth biggest source of criminal revenue in the EU. The phenomenon has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

That is why combatting trafficking in human beings is a priority for the European Union and its Member States.

The EU strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for 2021-2025, presented in April, addresses the specificity of the crime in a comprehensive way. The Strategy lays down priorities to reduce the demand that fosters the crime; break

* Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

† Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

the criminal business model of traffickers both offline and online; and protect, support and empower the victims, especially women and children.

One of the key pillars of the Strategy is the international dimension. The EU remains committed to use a range of foreign policy instruments and operational cooperation to help combat trafficking in partner countries, including through dedicated human rights and security dialogues.

An holistic approach is key to avoid hidden trafficking, in the value chain and procurement process of goods and services. A 'zero tolerance approach' is needed to achieve this objective.

Our commitment to address procurement in trafficking in human beings is firm. In 2014, the EU has adopted the EU Public Procurement legislation, which requires exclusion of economic operators convicted by final judgment of child labour and other forms of trafficking in human beings.

This May, the European Commission released new guidance for European contracting authorities on how to introduce social criteria into public tenders.

Particularly, the '*buying social*' guide provides practical indications for public buyers to consider the social impact of the goods, services, and works they purchase. It covers the entire procurement process step-by-step, including information on how to set up an organisational strategy for socially responsible public procurement, how to plan the tender procedure, as well as elements of contract management.

Responsible business conduct also plays a crucial role for sustainable and responsible value chains. In this regard, a Guidance on due diligence was published in July to help EU companies to address the risk of forced labour in their operations and supply chains, in line with international standards.

The European Commission is also preparing a legislative initiative on sustainable corporate governance, which intends to establish a horizontal corporate due diligence obligation entailing responsibility for both human rights and the environment, and applicable to all sectors covering companies' operations and supply chains.

Furthermore, as migrants are more at risks of being exploited, the European Commission has presented a set of actions to enhance the effectiveness of the EU legislation on sanctions against employers of illegally staying non-EU citizens. Simultaneously, in its external action, the EU transposes into EU law sanctions agreed by the UN and can make use of its autonomous tools whenever appropriate, including the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime.

Finally, the EU attaches a cardinal importance to the respect of human rights and combatting forced labour. As you may be aware of, in her State of the Union address, President von der Leyen announced that the European Commission will propose to ban forced labour goods from the EU market.

Joining our forces in the fight against trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation in supply chains and procurement is essential. We therefore appreciate and support the valuable efforts of UNODC in strengthening procurement policies in the context of trafficking in human beings.

Thank you, Madam Chair.