

*Office of the High  
Commissioner for Human  
Rights  
(OHCHR)*



*Global Prevention of High-  
Profile Exploitation and  
Human Trafficking  
Networks*

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## *I. INTRODUCTION*

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) convenes to address one of the most severe and persistent violations of human dignity in the contemporary world: the operation of large-scale, high-profile exploitation and human trafficking networks. Unlike localized criminal enterprises, these networks are transnational in nature, extraordinarily profitable, and in some cases benefit from the complicity or negligence of powerful individuals, including public officials, business leaders, and even state actors.

Human trafficking is defined under the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol, 2000) as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons through coercion, deception, or abuse of power, for the purpose of exploitation. This exploitation includes sexual exploitation, forced labor, domestic servitude, organ harvesting, and forced criminality. The crime is rendered especially insidious by the social vulnerabilities it exploits: poverty, displacement, discrimination, conflict, and statelessness.

What distinguishes the networks under consideration in this committee from ordinary criminal activity is their scope, sophistication, and the degree to which they are shielded from accountability by wealth, influence, and institutional failure. Evidence across multiple jurisdictions has demonstrated that traffickers and exploiters have, in some high-profile cases, cultivated relationships with political elites, law enforcement, and financial systems in ways that deliberately obstruct justice and silence survivors.

This committee's mandate is to consider how international mechanisms, including legal frameworks, institutional capacity, financial regulations, and survivor-centered policy approaches, can be strengthened to ensure that no individual, regardless of their wealth or influence, is beyond the reach of international human rights law. Delegates must engage with the political complexity of this issue: enforcement requires sovereignty-sensitive cooperation; victim protection must be balanced against investigative needs; and any solution

must confront the reality that some of the states most affected by trafficking are also among the least equipped, or least willing, to address it.

## **II. HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM**

### **2.1 The Origins of Human Trafficking as an International Concern**

The international community has recognized the problem of human trafficking in various forms for over a century, though the terminology and policy responses have evolved considerably. The earliest international instruments focused on what was termed 'white slavery,' the trafficking of women across international borders for sexual exploitation. The International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic (1904) and subsequent conventions established the principle that cross-border exploitation warranted multilateral legal responses, even if early frameworks were limited by their narrow demographic scope and colonial blind spots.

The post-World War II era brought a more comprehensive reconceptualization. The 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, adopted by the UN General Assembly, sought to address both the supply and demand sides of sexual exploitation. However, this convention faced significant ratification challenges and failed to account for the full range of trafficking forms, including labor trafficking, which would later emerge as equally severe in scale and suffering.

For much of the second half of the twentieth century, trafficking remained a relatively low-priority issue within the international human rights architecture. It was frequently conflated with smuggling, treated as a migration management problem rather than a human rights violation, or subsumed within broader debates about prostitution and sex work. The voices of survivors were largely absent from policy discussions, and the criminal networks responsible operated with remarkable impunity.

### **2.2 The Emergence of High-Profile Networks**

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries witnessed both an intensification of trafficking networks and the emergence of documented cases in which these networks

achieved exceptional scale and protection through connections to powerful individuals and institutions. Several structural factors drove this evolution.

The end of the Cold War created new zones of economic vulnerability in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, providing traffickers with large populations of desperate migrants willing to accept dangerous arrangements. Simultaneously, economic globalization facilitated the rapid movement of capital across borders, making it easier to launder trafficking proceeds through legitimate financial systems. The growth of the internet and digital communication transformed recruitment and advertising, enabling traffickers to operate across vast geographies while remaining harder to identify and locate.

Most significantly for this committee's mandate, high-profile cases in multiple countries revealed that trafficking and sexual exploitation networks had, in some instances, cultivated or corrupted powerful patrons. Investigations and prosecutorial proceedings in various jurisdictions uncovered networks in which traffickers socialized with or provided services to political figures, financiers, media executives, and even law enforcement personnel. These relationships provided operational protection, suppressed investigations, and ensured that survivors who attempted to report their exploitation were disbelieved, threatened, or legally attacked. The systematic nature of this protection was not incidental but structural: the networks' profitability depended on their ability to avoid accountability.

### 2.3 Landmark International Agreements and Their Limitations

The adoption of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its supplementary Palermo Protocol in 2000 represented a genuine milestone in the international legal architecture. The Palermo Protocol provided the first internationally agreed definition of trafficking, established obligations for criminalization, prosecution, and victim protection, and created a framework for international cooperation. As of the current period, the Protocol has achieved near-universal ratification, with over 175 states party to it.

However, ratification has not translated reliably into effective implementation. Independent reviews and reports by the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons have consistently identified critical gaps: inadequate criminalization of trafficking in national

law, insufficient victim identification and protection mechanisms, underfunded law enforcement capacity, and pervasive corruption. The Protocol contains no robust monitoring or enforcement mechanism; states self-report on their compliance, and there is no independent body with authority to assess national performance or impose consequences for failure.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (2000), and the ILO's Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, complemented the Palermo framework with specific protections for children. The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005) introduced stronger monitoring through the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), providing a regional model for independent evaluation that has produced more rigorous assessments than the global framework.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly incorporated anti-trafficking targets within Sustainable Development Goal 8 (decent work) and Goal 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), embedding the issue within the broader development framework. Yet SDG reporting has revealed that progress has been inconsistent and, in regions affected by conflict or economic crisis, has reversed.

## 2.4 Scale and Scope of the Crisis

The International Labour Organization estimates that approximately 40 million people are victims of modern slavery at any given time, of whom some 25 million are in forced labor and 15 million in forced marriages. Of those in forced labor, roughly 4.8 million are in forced sexual exploitation. The majority of identified trafficking victims are women and girls. Children constitute a disproportionate share of victims in certain regions and forms of exploitation, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

Human trafficking generates an estimated \$150 billion in illicit profits annually, making it one of the most profitable criminal enterprises in the world, surpassed only by drug trafficking. Sexual exploitation accounts for the largest share of profits despite representing a minority of victims by number, reflecting the extreme profitability of commercial sexual

services relative to other forms of forced labor. These profits are systematically laundered through real estate, hospitality, entertainment, and financial services sectors in both origin and destination countries.

The geographic patterns of trafficking reflect global economic inequalities. Major origin regions include sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Major destination regions include Western Europe, North America, the Gulf States, and prosperous cities across Asia. However, the distinction between origin and destination countries has blurred considerably; trafficking occurs within as well as across national borders, and wealthy countries generate significant domestic demand that sustains exploitation of both foreign and domestic victims.

### **III. CURRENT SITUATION**

#### **3.1 The Global Trafficking Landscape**

The contemporary trafficking crisis is characterized by a troubling paradox: international legal frameworks have never been more developed, yet trafficking networks have never been more sophisticated, profitable, or difficult to dismantle. Enforcement actions against individual traffickers occur routinely in many jurisdictions, but prosecutions of network leadership, particularly at the highest levels, remain exceptionally rare. The vast majority of trafficking prosecutions target low-level operatives: recruiters, transportation workers, or individual venue operators, while the financiers, organizers, and protectors who sustain the enterprise at scale face minimal legal risk.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated trafficking vulnerabilities significantly. Economic disruption increased poverty and desperation in source communities. Lockdowns and border closures disrupted both trafficking routes and law enforcement surveillance. The shift to digital platforms for recruitment and service provision, already underway before the pandemic, accelerated dramatically. Online recruitment of victims, digital payment systems for exploitation services, and encrypted communication among network members have all complicated law enforcement responses. At the same time, the closure of victim support services during the pandemic left survivors with even fewer options for assistance.

Conflict and climate-related displacement continue to generate the conditions of vulnerability that traffickers exploit. The UNHCR estimates that over 100 million people are currently forcibly displaced; this population, denied legal pathways and facing destitution, is systematically targeted by traffickers offering false promises of employment, education, or safety. Refugee camps and migration corridors have become recruitment grounds for exploitation networks, and the lack of documentation among displaced persons makes victim identification and survivor support especially challenging.

#### **3.2 High-Profile Networks and Accountability Gaps**

Among the most significant challenges identified by human rights investigators and prosecutors is the phenomenon of exploitation networks that achieve protection through

connections to powerful individuals and institutions. These connections may involve direct participation by powerful figures in trafficking activities; corruption payments to law enforcement, judicial, or political actors; or the social and professional integration of traffickers into elite networks that make their criminal activity harder to detect and investigate.

Documented cases from multiple countries provide evidence of this pattern. Investigations in several jurisdictions have revealed that individuals with extensive financial resources and political connections were able to sustain exploitation operations for extended periods, suppress investigations through legal harassment of survivors and journalists, and avoid prosecution despite the collection of substantial evidence. In some cases, victims were systematically discredited when they attempted to report their abuse; in others, investigators were reassigned or cases were quietly closed.

The accountability gap in high-profile cases is not solely a function of individual corruption. It reflects systemic features of legal and institutional design: statutes of limitations that expire before survivors feel safe enough to report; evidentiary standards that privilege physical evidence over survivor testimony in contexts where physical evidence is often unavailable; inadequate witness protection programs; and the resource asymmetry between wealthy defendants represented by elite legal teams and prosecution offices operating under severe resource constraints. International dimensions compound these problems: when networks operate across borders, no single jurisdiction has the full evidentiary picture, extradition is politically complicated, and the legal standards of different countries may not align.

### 3.3 Institutional and Legal Weaknesses

Several structural weaknesses in the current international architecture limit its effectiveness against high-profile trafficking networks. First, the voluntary nature of international cooperation in criminal matters means that evidence sharing and extradition depend on the political will of governments, which may have competing interests. Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) provide frameworks for cooperation but are slow, bureaucratic, and

frequently unused or misused. Countries with high levels of corruption may selectively fulfill MLAT requests in ways that protect connected individuals.

Second, financial investigation capacity remains inadequate in most jurisdictions. Trafficking proceeds flow through complex international financial structures involving shell companies, real estate, cash-intensive businesses, and cryptocurrency that are designed to make tracing difficult. Financial intelligence units in many countries lack the specialized training, legal authority, and international cooperation frameworks needed to follow money through these structures effectively. Without the ability to trace, seize, and forfeit trafficking proceeds, even successful prosecutions fail to dismantle the financial infrastructure of networks, which can reconstitute under new leadership.

Third, the treatment of survivors within criminal justice systems remains deeply problematic. Survivors are frequently treated as witnesses to be managed rather than rights-holders with agency. Residency rights may be conditioned on cooperation with prosecutions, creating coercive dependencies. Survivors who have engaged in illegal activity as a result of their trafficking, using false documents, working without authorization, or being forced to commit crimes, face prosecution rather than protection. The criminalization of survival behaviors not only violates survivors' rights but actively undermines prosecutions by creating incentives for non-cooperation.

### 3.4 Conflict Zones and State-Linked Exploitation

In conflict-affected regions, trafficking assumes particular severity and complexity. Armed groups have systematically used trafficking, sexual slavery, and forced labor as weapons of war and as sources of revenue. The Islamic State's documented enslavement of Yazidi women and girls, the trafficking of persons across the Mediterranean by militia groups operating in Libya, and the use of child soldiers across multiple conflict zones represent among the most egregious contemporary violations of human rights. In these contexts, accountability is further complicated by the breakdown of rule of law, the absence of functioning investigative institutions, and the difficulty of securing evidence and protecting survivors in active conflict environments.

State-linked exploitation presents a distinct challenge. In several countries, credible allegations have implicated state institutions, including military units, border agencies, and government officials, in trafficking operations or the receipt of proceeds from trafficking. Where the state itself is partially responsible for exploitation, the usual mechanisms of national law enforcement are unavailable or actively hostile to accountability. International pressure, including through the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process and targeted sanctions, represents the primary tool available, but its effectiveness depends on the political will of major powers to sustain that pressure against geopolitically important states.

## *IV. UN ACTIONS*

The United Nations system has developed a substantial architecture of instruments, bodies, and mechanisms addressing trafficking and exploitation, though the effectiveness of this architecture varies considerably across its components.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights holds the central mandate within the UN system for human rights monitoring and promotion. The OHCHR supports the work of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, both of whom are independent experts mandated by the Human Rights Council to monitor, report on, and make recommendations concerning their respective areas. These mandate holders conduct country visits, receive individual complaints, issue public reports, and provide technical assistance to governments, civil society organizations, and survivors. Their independence is their principal asset; they can report on sensitive cases and implicate powerful actors without the political constraints that bind intergovernmental bodies. Their weakness is the lack of enforcement authority: their findings and recommendations are advisory, and states are not obligated to implement them.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) houses the Secretariat of the UNTOC Convention and its Palermo Protocol, and administers the Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking. UNODC produces the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, a biennial publication that remains the most comprehensive source of comparative data on trafficking patterns, prosecution rates, and victim identification. UNODC also provides technical assistance to member states for law enforcement capacity building, legislative reform, and anti-corruption measures.

The United Nations Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT) initiative, implemented jointly by UNODC and the International Organization for Migration, operates in a growing number of priority countries to strengthen law enforcement response, enhance victim protection, and support civil society engagement. GLO.ACT represents the most operationally focused UN anti-trafficking effort, but its resources are limited relative to the scale of the challenge.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) focuses specifically on child victims, providing programming on prevention, protection, and recovery. UNICEF's work is particularly significant in conflict-affected environments and in source communities where child vulnerability is driven by poverty, lack of education, and family disruption. The International Labour Organization addresses forced labor trafficking through its Better Work program, which promotes labor rights compliance in global supply chains, and through technical assistance to governments on labor inspection systems.

The Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process subjects all UN member states to periodic examination of their human rights record, including their anti-trafficking performance. While UPR recommendations are non-binding, the process creates public accountability and peer pressure that has, in some cases, prompted genuine policy improvements. Several treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, monitor state compliance with binding conventions that address trafficking, with the authority to issue Concluding Observations that identify specific failures and required remedial measures.

The Security Council has addressed trafficking specifically in the context of conflict-related sexual violence, including through Resolution 2331 (2016), which recognized trafficking in persons as a tactic of terrorism and conflict, and called for measures to prevent trafficking in conflict situations. The Security Council's 1267 Sanctions Committee has listed trafficking-linked militia groups in certain contexts, although the political dynamics of the Council limit its ability to act on cases involving the interests of permanent members.

## **V. KEY POINTS**

### **5.1 Accountability for Powerful Actors**

The most significant and politically contested challenge before this committee is ensuring that individuals with wealth, political connections, or institutional power are subject to the same accountability as other traffickers. The current system fails in this respect, not because of a gap in legal principle, since no international instrument exempts powerful individuals from criminal liability, but because of implementation failures that systematically advantage defendants with resources.

Key questions for delegates to consider include: what mechanisms would reduce the structural advantages that wealth and influence provide within criminal proceedings? How can international cooperation frameworks be designed to prevent politically connected individuals from using their influence over national institutions to obstruct investigations? Should there be a specialized international body with jurisdiction over high-profile trafficking cases, and if so, what would its relationship to national courts be? How can the testimony of survivors be given appropriate evidentiary weight, including through procedural reforms that reduce the trauma of testifying and increase survivor safety?

### **5.2 Border Management and International Cooperation**

Trafficking is inherently transnational, and effective response requires cooperation across jurisdictions that often have divergent legal standards, different enforcement priorities, and complex geopolitical relationships. The existing framework of bilateral and multilateral police cooperation, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties, and joint investigation teams provides the formal infrastructure for cooperation, but practical barriers, including language differences, incompatible data systems, legal restrictions on information sharing, and political interference, frequently prevent this infrastructure from functioning effectively.

Simultaneously, border management must be designed in ways that do not harm the migrants and asylum seekers who are most vulnerable to trafficking. Hard border enforcement, visa restrictions, and criminalization of irregular migration increase migrants' dependence on smuggling networks, many of which overlap with or transition into trafficking

operations. Policies that provide legal migration pathways, protect the rights of irregular migrants, and ensure that enforcement activities identify and protect trafficking victims rather than treating them as criminals are essential elements of a rights-consistent approach.

### 5.3 Victim Protection and Support

International human rights standards establish clear obligations for victim protection: states must identify trafficking victims, ensure they receive medical and psychological assistance, provide legal protection against prosecution for offenses committed as a result of their trafficking, offer residency rights that are not conditioned on cooperation with prosecution, and support long-term recovery and reintegration. The reality, however, is that most countries fall significantly short of these standards.

The underfunding of victim support services is nearly universal. Shelters are insufficient in number, often restricted in whom they can serve, and frequently operate with inadequate security to protect survivors from traffickers. Legal aid for survivors navigating criminal proceedings or immigration systems is rarely available. Support for the specific needs of male victims, LGBTQ+ victims, or victims with disabilities is even more limited. The committee must consider how international mechanisms can create stronger incentives for states to invest in survivor-centered support systems, and how civil society organizations, which currently provide the majority of direct victim services globally, can be better resourced and protected.

The financial dimension of trafficking is both its greatest vulnerability and its most neglected aspect. Trafficking networks require financial infrastructure: accounts to receive payments, systems to launder proceeds, and mechanisms to pay employees and suppliers. This infrastructure leaves traces that, with sufficient investigative capacity and international cooperation, can be followed to identify network leadership, even when those leaders insulate themselves from direct participation in exploitation.

The FATF (Financial Action Task Force) has issued guidance on the financial aspects of human trafficking, and some jurisdictions have developed sophisticated financial investigation units capable of tracing trafficking proceeds. However, implementation is uneven, and the use of shell companies in secrecy jurisdictions, cryptocurrency, and cash-

intensive businesses to launder trafficking proceeds continues to present significant challenges. The committee should consider what changes to international financial regulatory standards, beneficial ownership transparency requirements, and cross-border asset recovery mechanisms would most effectively target the financial infrastructure of high-profile networks

## 5.5 Technology, Surveillance, and Privacy Concerns

Digital technology has transformed both the operation of trafficking networks and the tools available to counter them. Social media platforms, dating applications, and classified advertising sites are heavily used for recruitment of victims and advertising of exploitation services. Encrypted communication tools protect traffickers' operational security. Cryptocurrency facilitates anonymous payments.

Technology companies play an ambiguous role: they provide the infrastructure that trafficking exploits, but they also possess data that could be critical for investigations. The appropriate boundaries of technology company cooperation with law enforcement in trafficking cases raise genuine tensions between privacy rights, freedom of expression, and the need to prevent exploitation. AI-based tools for detecting trafficking advertising, scanning financial transactions for suspicious patterns, and identifying victims in digital content are under development and show promise, but also raise concerns about bias, accuracy, and the risks of mass surveillance being deployed against vulnerable populations. The committee must engage with these tensions rather than adopting simplistic positions on either surveillance or privacy.

## **VI. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### **6.1 Strengthening the UN Special Rapporteur Mandate**

The existing UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons could be strengthened through expanded resources, enhanced mandate authority to conduct investigative field missions in high-profile cases, a formal reporting track to the Security Council for trafficking in conflict contexts, and stronger member state obligations to respond to Rapporteur recommendations. This approach preserves the independence and flexibility of the current system while addressing its resource and authority limitations. However, it depends on political support from states that may resist enhanced scrutiny of their own records.

### **6.2 International Anti-Trafficking Court or Tribunal**

A more ambitious proposal involves the creation of a specialized international court or tribunal with jurisdiction over high-profile trafficking cases where national accountability mechanisms have demonstrably failed. Drawing on the model of the International Criminal Court but with a specific mandate focused on trafficking and exploitation, such a body could address the accountability gap for powerful individuals in a way that national systems have been unable to achieve. Critical design questions include: what threshold of national failure would trigger international jurisdiction? How would the court's relationship to the ICC be defined? What political support would be needed to establish and sustain such a body, particularly given the sovereignty sensitivities of major powers?

### **6.3 Financial Intelligence Cooperation Network**

A dedicated international network linking financial intelligence units, prosecutors, and asset recovery agencies across jurisdictions could dramatically improve the capacity to trace and recover trafficking proceeds. Building on existing mechanisms such as the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, a specialized trafficking-focused network could maintain shared databases of trafficking-linked financial entities, provide rapid response coordination for asset freezes, and support capacity building in jurisdictions with weak financial investigation

capabilities. This approach could achieve significant impact without requiring new treaty negotiations, building instead on existing institutions and bilateral relationships.

#### 6.4 Mandatory National Action Plans with Independent Peer Review

Universal adoption of mandatory National Action Plans on anti-trafficking, combined with independent peer review by a body with credible expertise and access, would create stronger accountability than the current system of self-reporting and voluntary examination. Drawing on the model of the GRETA mechanism under the Council of Europe Convention, but applied globally through the OHCHR framework, this approach would identify specific national failures and required remedial actions, with findings made public. The political challenge is securing agreement from states with poor records to subject themselves to credible independent scrutiny.

#### 6.5 Survivor-Centered Justice Framework

A comprehensive international framework specifically governing the treatment of trafficking survivors within criminal justice systems could address the systematic ways in which survivors are currently disadvantaged and re-traumatized. Such a framework would establish enforceable standards for survivor testimony, non-prosecution of trafficking-related offenses, residency rights, legal aid, witness protection, and trauma-informed engagement by investigators and prosecutors. Ensuring that survivor organizations have meaningful participation in the design and monitoring of anti-trafficking policy, at both national and international levels, would help ensure that frameworks reflect the actual needs of those most affected.

#### 6.6 Technology and Digital Monitoring Protocols

Negotiated protocols governing the responsibilities of technology companies in relation to trafficking would provide clearer frameworks for content moderation, data retention, and law enforcement cooperation in trafficking cases, while establishing privacy safeguards against overly broad surveillance. These protocols could address the current situation in which

technology company cooperation with anti-trafficking efforts is largely voluntary and inconsistent, while ensuring that anti-trafficking technology tools are developed and deployed in rights-consistent ways that protect rather than endanger vulnerable populations. The negotiation of such protocols would require meaningful engagement with technology companies, civil society, and affected communities.

## *VII. COUNTRIES INVOLVED*

### *United Kingdom*

The UK maintains one of the most comprehensive national anti-trafficking legislative frameworks, including the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which introduced transparency requirements for supply chains and established an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. However, the UK's record is complicated by its immigration enforcement policies, which campaigners argue undermine victim identification and support. The UK will advocate for stronger international legal standards while defending the compatibility of its own immigration policies with human rights obligations. Its extensive financial sector gives it particular interest and capacity in financial investigation frameworks.

### *Germany*

As one of the primary destination countries for trafficking in Europe, Germany has invested significantly in law enforcement capacity and victim support services. German law provides relatively strong protections for trafficking victims, including non-criminalization of victims for offenses committed as a result of their trafficking. Germany will support enhanced international cooperation mechanisms and robust financial investigation frameworks. The debate within Germany about its approach to prostitution regulation, including the Prostitution Act and subsequent reforms, has generated significant controversy about the relationship between sex work policy and trafficking, a tension that will affect Germany's positioning in committee.

### *France*

France adopted a comprehensive anti-prostitution law in 2016 that criminalized the purchase of sexual services (the Nordic model), making it a strong advocate for demand-side approaches to ending sexual exploitation. France has been active in supporting international anti-trafficking measures through the EU and the Council of Europe. France will advocate for mandatory demand reduction measures as part of any comprehensive international framework. France's significant ODA budget gives it capacity to support victim-centered

programming in source countries, a position it will promote as part of its broader development agenda.

## Canada

Canada combines a strong domestic human rights framework with significant international development programming focused on gender-based violence and trafficking prevention. Canada has been a significant funder of anti-trafficking programs globally and plays an active role in multilateral anti-trafficking efforts. Canada will support survivor-centered approaches, financial investigation capacity building, and enhanced international cooperation. Canada's own record on Indigenous trafficking victims, who are disproportionately represented among victims in Canada and have historically received inadequate institutional support, will be a point of attention in committee discussions about ensuring that all communities receive equitable protection.

## Sweden

Sweden pioneered the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services (the "Swedish model" or Nordic model) in 1999, and has since been among the most vocal advocates for this approach internationally. Sweden's domestic record on trafficking prosecution and victim support is strong, and Sweden contributes significantly to international anti-trafficking efforts through its development assistance programs. Sweden chairs or actively participates in key multilateral forums on trafficking and will bring strong advocacy for demand criminalization and survivor rights to the committee. Sweden's non-aligned status and tradition of international humanitarianism give it credibility with a broad range of delegations.

## Netherlands

The Netherlands presents a complex case: it operates one of the most legally regulated sex industries in Europe, based on the premise that regulation reduces exploitation, but has faced criticism for trafficking and exploitation within the legal sector. The Netherlands has significant law enforcement capacity and is a major contributor to Europol and Eurojust anti-

trafficking efforts. Dutch financial institutions and investigators have developed expertise in tracing trafficking proceeds through complex financial structures. The Netherlands will likely support enhanced monitoring and accountability mechanisms while defending the Dutch model of regulation over prohibition.

## Australia

Australia faces challenges from trafficking both at its borders and domestically, particularly in the agricultural sector and in the domestic worker context. Australia's Modern Slavery Act 2018 extended supply chain transparency requirements to a broad range of entities. Australia is an important voice on anti-trafficking policy in the Pacific region, where exploitation vulnerabilities are significant. Australia will support stronger international cooperation mechanisms and financial investigation frameworks, and will draw attention to Pacific regional challenges

## Spain

Spain is both a destination and transit country for trafficking, particularly sexual exploitation networks originating in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and West Africa. Spain has significantly strengthened its anti-trafficking legal framework and law enforcement capacity in recent years and has been active in regional efforts through the EU. Spain's historical and linguistic ties to Latin America position it as a bridge between European and Latin American perspectives in committee, and it may play a constructive bridging role on issues affecting source countries in the western hemisphere.

## Italy

Italy faces significant challenges as a major arrival point for migrants crossing the Mediterranean, many of whom are vulnerable to trafficking. Italian anti-trafficking law provides relatively strong protections, and Italian prosecutors have developed considerable expertise in prosecuting trafficking networks. At the same time, Italy's approach to migration management has been criticized for creating conditions that increase vulnerability to

exploitation. Italy will support stronger international cooperation mechanisms and will bring a frontline perspective on the intersection of migration and trafficking.

## Argentina

Argentina has experienced significant human trafficking challenges domestically, including internal trafficking of vulnerable women and children. Argentina's anti-trafficking law, comprehensively reformed in 2012, is one of the stronger frameworks in Latin America. Argentina is an active voice in multilateral anti-trafficking discussions and will bring a Latin American perspective on source-country challenges, the role of poverty and economic inequality in trafficking vulnerability, and the need for international support for victim recovery programs. Argentina's history of prosecuting human rights violators from its own past gives it credibility on accountability questions.

## South Africa

South Africa is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in persons. The Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act 2013 provides a comprehensive framework, though implementation has been uneven. South Africa plays a significant regional leadership role in anti-trafficking efforts in Southern Africa and will bring an African regional perspective to the committee. South Africa will advocate for capacity building support for developing countries and for ensuring that international frameworks take adequate account of African contexts. South Africa's own legacy of apartheid and historical exploitation of Black South Africans informs its approach to questions of structural vulnerability and accountability.

## Russia

Russia is both a source country for trafficking victims, particularly in Eastern Europe, and a country where law enforcement corruption has been documented in connection with trafficking operations. Russia's positions on sovereignty and non-interference limit its support for international accountability mechanisms. Russia will be cautious about any proposals that could create international jurisdiction over activities within Russian territory

and will focus on sovereignty-protective framing of any solutions. Russia's conflict with Ukraine has created massive displacement that has exacerbated trafficking vulnerabilities. Russia will contest characterizations of its actions as contributing to trafficking conditions.

## United States

The United States occupies a complex position in this committee. As the world's largest economy and a major destination country, the US both drives significant demand for exploited labor and services and maintains extensive law enforcement capacity. The US Trafficking in Persons Report, published annually by the State Department, is the most widely consulted global assessment of anti-trafficking performance, though its geopolitical dimensions have drawn criticism for inconsistency. The US will support strong international accountability mechanisms in principle while defending the primacy of national jurisdiction and resisting frameworks that could subject Americans to international legal proceedings. Domestic challenges, including sex tourism involving American citizens abroad, gaps in labor trafficking enforcement, and concerns about survivor criminalization, will be points of attention.

## China

China is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in persons, with documented patterns of labor trafficking involving Chinese workers sent abroad under exploitative conditions and internal trafficking of women and girls. China's government has maintained legal frameworks criminalizing trafficking but has been criticized for inadequate enforcement, particularly in relation to trafficking of North Korean refugees. China's strong sovereignty position limits its openness to international monitoring mechanisms. China will support technical cooperation and capacity building while opposing measures that would create international oversight of national enforcement or implicate Chinese state actors.

## India

India is one of the countries most significantly affected by trafficking, both in terms of absolute numbers of victims and the diversity of trafficking forms: bonded labor, child labor,

domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage all occur at significant scale. India's legal framework includes the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act and various other provisions, but enforcement is highly uneven and corruption within law enforcement is a documented challenge. India will support international frameworks that emphasize capacity building and technical assistance for developing countries while resisting accountability mechanisms that it may perceive as targeting its internal practices.

## Mexico

Mexico is a major source and transit country for trafficking to the United States and a destination country for trafficking within the Central American region. Trafficking networks in Mexico operate in an environment complicated by the presence of powerful criminal organizations with significant corruption influence over state institutions at multiple levels. Mexico will emphasize the structural drivers of trafficking, including poverty, inequality, and forced displacement, and advocate for development-oriented approaches. Mexico may be cautious about proposals that could compromise its sovereignty or implicitly criticize its relationships with law enforcement.

## Brazil

Brazil faces significant challenges across multiple forms of trafficking, including labor trafficking in agricultural and domestic service contexts, child sexual exploitation, and sex tourism. Brazil's size and economic complexity make national enforcement highly uneven. Brazil will advocate for approaches that address the root causes of trafficking in economic inequality and racial discrimination, and for ensuring that indigenous and Afro-Brazilian communities, who are disproportionately affected, receive specific attention in international frameworks. Brazil will support stronger financial investigation mechanisms given its experience with trafficking proceeds being laundered through its financial system.

## Thailand

Thailand is a major source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in the Southeast Asian region, with well-documented challenges in the fishing industry, domestic service, and

sex tourism sectors. Thai law enforcement has improved significantly in recent years, but corruption and the scale of the challenge remain significant obstacles. Thailand will emphasize the complexity of distinguishing trafficking from consensual migration and sex work, and may resist frameworks that criminalize demand in ways that conflict with Thai approaches to sex work regulation.

## Philippines

The Philippines is one of the most significant source countries for trafficking globally, with large numbers of Filipinos working abroad under conditions that range from legitimate employment to severe exploitation. The Philippines has invested significantly in anti-trafficking law enforcement and victim return and reintegration programs. However, domestic trafficking, particularly sexual exploitation of children facilitated by digital technology and cyber-trafficking, remains a severe challenge. The Philippines will advocate for enhanced protections for migrant workers, accountability for destination-country employers and exploiters, and international support for source-country reintegration programs.

## Turkey

Turkey is a significant transit and destination country for trafficking, located at the intersection of major migration routes from Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Turkey has been criticized for inadequate victim identification and support, particularly in relation to Syrian refugees, of whom Turkey hosts the largest number globally. Turkey's approach to trafficking is complicated by its broader migration management priorities. Turkey will resist any proposals that it perceives as placing unfair burdens on transit countries or as interfering with its border management sovereignty.

## United Arab Emirates

The UAE is a destination country for labor trafficking and a transit hub for sexual exploitation networks. The kafala sponsorship system, which ties migrant workers' legal status to their employers, creates significant structural conditions for labor exploitation. The UAE has

introduced some reforms to the kafala system but has faced sustained criticism for inadequate labor protections. The UAE's role as a major financial center raises questions about the use of UAE financial institutions for trafficking proceeds. The UAE will support anti-trafficking frameworks in principle while being cautious about any measures that could implicate its financial sector or challenge the kafala system.

## Qatar

Qatar faces significant scrutiny of its treatment of migrant workers, who constitute the majority of its workforce and have been subject to exploitation conditions under the kafala system. The FIFA World Cup preparations drew international attention to labor conditions in Qatari construction projects. Qatar has implemented some labor reforms but will likely resist international accountability mechanisms it perceives as targeting its labor governance model. Qatar will emphasize reforms it has undertaken and seek to position itself as engaged in good-faith improvement.

## Nigeria

Nigeria is both a major source country for trafficking to Europe and North Africa and a country where trafficking occurs domestically at significant scale. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has developed significant capacity, but challenges including corruption, inadequate resources, and the scale of the problem limit effectiveness. Trafficking networks based in Nigeria, particularly those operating through Edo State, are among the most sophisticated documented, involving debt bondage, religious coercion, and extensive transnational networks. Nigeria will advocate for international support for source-country capacity building and for addressing the demand-side responsibility of destination countries.

## Libya

Libya represents one of the most severe contexts for trafficking and exploitation globally. The collapse of the Libyan state following the 2011 conflict created conditions in which militias and criminal networks openly enslaved migrants attempting to transit Libya to

Europe. The UN has documented a functioning slave market operating in Libya as recently as 2017, with migrants being bought and sold for labor and sexual exploitation. Accountability for these violations has been almost entirely absent. Libya's delegation, whatever government it may formally represent, will face difficult questions about what international mechanisms could effectively address exploitation in a context of ongoing conflict and state failure.

### North Korea

North Korea represents a unique and extreme case within this committee's mandate. The state itself operates systems that international monitors characterize as involving elements of forced labor for substantial portions of the population. North Korean workers have been deployed abroad under state arrangements that international organizations describe as conditions of forced labor. North Korean refugees who flee the country are systematically trafficked, with women and girls facing particularly severe exploitation in China and Southeast Asia. North Korea will deny these characterizations and resist any international monitoring or accountability measures, framing them as violations of sovereignty.

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