



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

17 June 2013

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to enclose herewith a summary of the High-Level Meeting on “the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons”, held from 13 to 15 May 2013 at the United Nations Headquarters.

In this connection, I would like to thank once again all of these who made this event a success. I wish to express my gratitude to the Heads of State and Government, Ministers and other high-level officials for actively participating in the high-level event.

I also wish to thank the speakers who participated in the plenary session, civil society, representatives of non-governmental organizations, survivors, private sector representatives of the media, representatives of international organizations, and other stakeholders.

Last but not least, I express my appreciation to the co-facilitators, Ambassador Martin Sajdik of Austria and Ambassador Antonio Pedro Montero Lima of Cape Verde, for their invaluable efforts in support of the high-level event

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vuk Jeremic', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Vuk Jeremic

To All Permanent Members
And Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

General Assembly High-Level Meeting on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

New York, 13-15 May 2013

President's Summary

The President of the General Assembly convened a High-Level Meeting on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons from 13 to 15 May 2013. The Meeting was held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/293 of 30 July 2010 entitled "United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons" (op. par. 6) and General Assembly resolution 67/190 of 20 December 2012 entitled "Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons" (op. par. 12).

On 7 February 2013, the President appointed the Permanent Representative of Austria, H.E. Mr. Martin Sajdik, and the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde, H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Montero Lima, as co-facilitators to conduct open-ended informal consultations with Member States to determine the modalities of the High-Level Meeting, including participation of international, regional, sub regional organizations and civil society, pursuant to op. 13 of resolution 67/190. This resolution called for the High Level Meeting to assess achievements, gaps and challenges in the Global Plan of Action including in the implementation of relevant legal instruments.

On 1 May 2013, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/260 determining the "Modalities, format and organization" of the high-level meeting which would consist of an Opening and Plenary Session, two Panel Discussions, and Closing by the President of the General Assembly. Pursuant to the modalities resolution, the themes of the panel discussions were: "The Global Plan of Action, relevant legal instruments and effective partnerships to protect and assist victims of human trafficking"; and, "Sharing best practices and lessons learned for prevention and prosecution in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and relevant legal instruments." Participation in each panel included Member States, Observers, representatives of United Nations organizations and entities, and representatives of international, regional and subregional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the media, as per resolution 67/260.

Eighty-eight Member States and three Observers made statements during the Plenary Session, including a number of high-level officials from capitals. In addition, 317 representatives of civil society registered to attend the meeting and a number participated in the Panel Discussions. In light of the overwhelming interest, the High-Level Meeting extended into a third day. Several successful side events were also held on the margins of the meeting.

Plenary Meeting

Human trafficking is a crime that ruthlessly exploits women, children and men for numerous purposes including forced labour and sex. This global crime generates billions of dollars in profits for the traffickers. It is estimated that 20.9 million people are victims of forced labour globally. This includes victims of human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation. While it is not known how many of these victims were trafficked, the estimate implies that currently, there are millions of victims of trafficking in persons in the world. Every country in the world is affected by human trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims.

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (A/RES/64/293), urging Governments worldwide to take coordinated and consistent measures to defeat this crime and egregious violation of human rights. By adopting this landmark Plan, Governments resolved to take concrete action to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, protect and assist victims, prosecute related crimes and strengthen partnership among governmental institutions, intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, including the media.

The four point Global Plan of Action focuses on: 1) Prevention of trafficking in persons; 2) Protection of and assistance to victims of trafficking in persons; 3) Prosecution of crimes of trafficking in persons; and, 4) Strengthening of partnerships against trafficking in persons.

The Plan calls for integrating the fight against human trafficking into the UN's broader programmes, to boost development and strengthen security worldwide, and established the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, as well as a biennial Global Report on Trafficking in Persons. The plan called for an appraisal of its progress in 2013.

Resolution 67/190 of December 2012 indicates that despite sustained measures taken at the international, regional and national levels, trafficking in persons remains one of the world's grimmest challenges. Plenary Session opening speakers (the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Executive-Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as well as eminent members of civil society) and Member States, highlighted that the meeting provided a important opportunity to review achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Global Plan three years after the adoption of the Global Plan and ten years since the entry into force of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which now has 175 states parties, and of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons which now has 154 parties. Speakers called on the remaining 39 States to ratify the Protocol.

The Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, released by UNODC in December 2012, (and presented to Member States in New York in February 2013), tasked UNODC with data collection and biennial reporting on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at

the global, regional and national levels. According to the Global Report, at least 136 different nationalities were trafficked and detected in 118 different countries. Human trafficking happens throughout the world with millions of victims falling through the cracks of their own societies only to be exploited by traffickers. They can be found in the world's restaurants, fisheries, brothels, farms and homes, among many other activities. One of the most worrying trends is the increase in child victims. The vast majority of trafficked persons are women. Additional information about human trafficking continues to be needed. The Global Report is however a stepping stone in the right direction, and it highlights the dedication and commitment of Member States to tackle this crime, while calling on countries to do more. The data collection for the 2014 Global Report has started, and Member States are invited to contribute. The 2012 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons highlighted achievements: 83 per cent of Member States now have legislation to combat human trafficking; this number was only 60 per cent in 2009. Countries in Africa and the Middle East that now have appropriate legislation have doubled in number since 2010. However, impunity persists: 16 per cent of all UN Member States have never recorded a single conviction for human trafficking.

Coordination among Member States and within the UN remains another challenge. The full engagement of the Inter-agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) has not been reached. At present, the Working Group of this body, which is open to all, consists of only six UN entities. Improved coordination should ensure that more data are collected and analyzed: the 2012 Global Report was prepared based on data from only 132 Member States, i.e. 61 countries did not provide any information for the report.

A final challenge mentioned by many speakers was the status of the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking. Eleven NGOs have started providing assistance to victims, and successfully, but resources are running out fast. The *Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking* is one of the most important aspects of the Global Plan of Action. Its focus is to provide humanitarian, legal and financial aid to victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, through established channels of assistance, such as governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Fund is managed by UNODC with a board of trustees representing all regions of the world, appointed by the Secretary-General.

The Fund operates, subject to the availability of funds, a Small Grants Facility which is open to all not-for-profit NGOs working to provide direct support to victims of human trafficking. The Small Grants Facility targets frontline organizations which provide tangible assistance directly to victims. From Cambodia to Costa Rica and Albania to the United States, the Fund assists organizations across the world in helping those who need it the most. Its work reflects the international nature of human trafficking as well as the differing services required to help victims of this crime. In promoting this inclusive approach, support is given to a range of NGOs who provide victim-focused services. These include running shelters and emergency housing, offering rehabilitation and reintegration services, providing income generation advice and legal support, and helping victims with psychosocial counseling and medical treatment. Donations directly help someone who has been victimized by human traffickers.

Member States wishing to make a pledge to the Trust Fund in advance of or during the high-level meeting are requested to contact UNODC.

Throughout the Plenary Session, Member States expressed their political will to fight trafficking in persons and continued to express hope that additional funding would become available through the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking. In the course of the High Level Meeting, five Member States pledged specific amounts to the Trust Fund (Saudi Arabia and Sweden pledged \$100,000 each; Belarus and the United Arab Emirates pledged \$50,000; Singapore pledged \$3,000 and four Member States announced a future pledge to the Trust Fund in a to-be-determined amount (Australia, Austria, Cape Verde, the Kingdom of Thailand).

Panel Discussions I and II

On the afternoon of 13 May, interactive Panel Discussions were chaired by the Permanent Representative of Austria, H.E. Mr. Martin Sajdik, and the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde, H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Montero Lima, the President's appointed co-facilitators to conduct open-ended informal consultations with Member States to determine the modalities of the High-Level Meeting. The panels included NGO leaders, survivors, private sector leaders, journalists, leaders from international organizations, diplomats, and other experts.

Speakers on Panel Discussion I ("The Global Plan of Action, relevant legal instruments, and effective Partnerships to Protect and Assist Victims of Human Trafficking") highlighted the need for survivors and the media to be involved in awareness raising and noted that close partnerships between the media, governments and civil society should be established where possible. They further noted that victims should benefit from remedies available to them, including through the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking which requires more funds; and some victims' assistance best practices were shared. NGO representatives and Member States alike highlighted that the demand for human trafficking should be targeted as a root cause, and that there should be an increased and renewed focus on prevention. Calls for all States to ratify the Palermo Protocol were again made, in addition to the need to ratify ILO Convention 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers and ILO Convention 143 concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers.

Panel Discussion II ("Sharing Best Practices and Lessons Learned for Prevention and Prosecution in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and relevant legal instruments") re-enforced some of the aforementioned points and, additionally, triggered conversation about the need to increase prosecution of traffickers and to focus on limiting the demand-side of the work offered by those who may be trafficked – both due to prostitution and below-standard paid labor. Speakers highlighted the important role played by UNODC in data gathering and providing technical assistance to ensure that law

enforcement, legal and border professionals obtain the required capacities to carry out investigations and prosecutions of traffickers.

Speakers also highlighted that destination countries should share responsibility for human trafficking with countries of origin and that best practices should be shared as much as possible. Speakers agreed that the fight against human trafficking should be part of the post-2015 development discussions and the next UN Crime Congress in Qatar in 2015. They further highlighted the fact that the private sector has an increasingly significant role to play in the prevention of human trafficking worldwide.

Conclusion

The testimonies and proposals in the course of the High Level Meeting were enlightening, reminding all how much can be done to tackle this heinous crime despite the divergent contexts in which we all operate. Some of us are transit countries, others countries of origin or destination, and some of us may face two or three of these challenges in our countries at the same time. Many best practices were exchanged in the course of the Meeting as were the challenges in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

First, still too many Member States have not ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, and implementation is lacking among many who have ratified it years ago. Legislation means nothing if it is not being implemented by law enforcement agencies, lawyers and judges: we must phase out impunity for human trafficking in our lifetime.

Second, the role of civil society, including NGOs, is indispensable in the fight against human trafficking. It is mostly NGOs who work with - and through - survivors on the ground: Member States must continue to learn from civil society, including survivors, and increase their efforts to seek civil society input and guidance as we implement the Global Plan of Action. In doing so, we must continue to focus on the particular needs of children and women.

Third, there is a real need for increased cooperation, partnerships and technical assistance to better implement the Global Plan of Action and relevant legal instruments. Starting with the UN itself, the 16 entities that work to fight human trafficking should all participate in the Interagency Coordination group Against Trafficking in Persons (or ICAT). In addition, there is a dire need to develop partnerships with the media and private sector, and to focus on a “bottom up” approach where appropriate. This will ensure that our prevention work focuses on the villages and towns where sophisticated trafficking routes often start.

Fourth, improved coordination, research and data is a necessity. Member States rely on UNODC for such research. As the main UN entity mandated to fight human trafficking, UNODC currently has only two regular budget posts dedicated to this cause. There is a great need to strengthen the capacity of UNODC so that it can continue to assist Member

States with the grandiose task ahead of us all. And, Member States are encouraged to share relevant data to allow for UNODC to carry out its essential analyses.

Fifth, the disparity between the criminal income of the trafficking in persons industry and the comparatively meager funds dedicated to preventing and responding to this crime is astonishing. The UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking, Especially Women and Children, one of the most important aspects of the Global Plan of Action, has done much with the very little in resources it has received. However, its work cannot continue to meet its mandate absent robust and reliable funding.

The High Level Meeting evinced overwhelming political will to step up efforts against trafficking in persons. We must capitalize on this momentum and re-energize ourselves to eradicate this atrocious phenomenon once and for all so that we can truly proclaim that all human beings are born free and that none are held in slavery or servitude, as this General Assembly envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights over six decades ago.

Vuk Jeremić