

13 May 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at the High-level Meeting on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of
Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons**

Mr. Secretary-General,
Mr. Executive Director of UNODC,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you to the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

At the onset of my remarks, allow me to pay special tribute to the survivors, who are joining us here today.

Their courage commands profound respect, and their fortitude should be a source of inspiration for us all.

We highly appreciate your taking part in the afternoon panel discussions, together with some of the world's foremost activists—men and women who have devoted their careers to bringing to an end this appalling form of modern-day slavery.

I am indebted to our co-facilitators for this event, the Permanent Representative of Austria, H.E. Mr. Martin Sajdik, and the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde, H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima. Gentlemen, I wholeheartedly thank you for your dedication and hard work.

I would also like to acknowledge the essential role of UNODC, and its Executive Director Mr. Yury Fedotov, in helping us organize today's meeting, and for their ongoing role in coordinating the international community's response to human trafficking.

Last but not least, I would also like to express my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his strong leadership in the fight against this heinous crime, and for his robust support for the implementation of the Plan of Action.

Excellencies,

Human trafficking has developed into a global criminal enterprise that generates an estimated 32 billion U.S. dollars in illicit revenue per year.

Today, perhaps as many as 25 million persons are victims of this barbarity.

The Plan of Action was put in place by the General Assembly to bring it to an end.

It was designed to enhance international coordination to protect and assist victims, prosecute alleged perpetrators, and strengthen relevant partnerships between governments, civil society, media, and the private sector.

The Plan of Action also provides a framework for how the fight against human trafficking can be properly integrated into the UN's longer-term comprehensive strategy. I believe this should become an integral part of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, which will undoubtedly frame much of the UN's work for decades to come.

Excellencies,

Virtually every nation across the globe has been exposed to this atrocious practice—whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination.

Resolution 67/190, which was adopted last December, indicates that despite sustained measures taken at the international, regional and national levels, trafficking in persons remains one of the world's grimmest challenges.

This was also a central conclusion of the Interactive Dialogue on the Prevention of Human Trafficking, held in the General Assembly last April.

It underscored the fact that a more concerted and comprehensive global response is required if we are to address what one victims' rights advocate called a 'pandemic', in a more effective manner.

Today's high-level meeting provides us with an opportunity to examine how much progress has been achieved in building up the four pillars of the Plan of Action—namely Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership—as well as explore ways to strengthen the role and capacity of UNODC in helping to implement it.

Participants will also have a chance to present concrete ideas about how to improve international cooperation in this field. In addition, they will be able to consider how to improve the effectiveness of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, which was established by this body during the 61st Session.

As President of the General Assembly, allow me to extend an appeal not only to Member States, but also to philanthropic organizations as well as to the private sector, to increase their support for the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Created by the Secretary-General as a result of a General Assembly resolution, it provides indispensable

humanitarian, legal, and financial aid for those most directly affected by this modern-day version of slavery.

Excellencies,

I believe we must place the victims of human trafficking at the center of our work.

No effort must be spared to bring to an end the servitude of millions, while helping the survivors rebuild their lives.

To achieve this, law enforcement officials, border control officers, labor inspectors, consular and embassy officials, judges and prosecutors, as well as peacekeepers, must not only increase their vigilance, but be further sensitized to the needs of victims. They should also come to work more closely with social service providers and other care-givers.

Excellencies,

In the last few years, one hundred and fifty-four Member States have become party to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Traffickers in Persons, especially Women and Children—the first global, legally-binding instrument on this critically important issue.

I respectfully urge the Member States which have not yet done so to ratify it at the earliest opportunity. In coming to the end of my remarks, allow me to express my gratitude to Ms. Mira Sorvino, the UN's Goodwill Ambassador against Human Trafficking, for her efforts to rid the world of this atrocious practice.

On June 6th, 2012—two days before I was elected President of the General Assembly—I had the privilege of hearing her speak in this Great Hall, at the invitation of my predecessor as PGA, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser.

She talked of the survivors she had met over the course of her work, recalling harrowing stories of their terrible ordeals.

Near the end of her remarks, she made a heartfelt appeal to the audience: “I hope that all of you here present will generate a sea change in your own countries, and help bring human trafficking to an end in our lifetime.”

Let us wholeheartedly support this earnest entreaty, and have it become our clarion call to action.

Let us stand as one on this issue, and purge the globe of this horrendous affront to human dignity.

Thank you for your attention.